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**The higher direction of combined operations in the United Kingdom from Dunkirk to Pearl Harbour.**

Steers, Howard Joseph Thomas

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THE HIGHER DIRECTION OF COMBINED OPERATIONS IN THE  
UNITED KINGDOM FROM DUNKIRK TO PEARL HARBOR

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

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H.J.T. Steers

## ABSTRACT

# THE HIGHER DIRECTION OF COMBINED OPERATIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM DUNKIRK TO PEARL HARBOR

Howard Joseph Thomas Steers

This thesis examines the relationship between the rational, organisational, and personal influences on the direction, at the higher levels, of combined (amphibious) operations in the United Kingdom during 1940 and 1941. It details the combined operations policy in effect during this period and the development of material requirements, the establishment and modification of the combined operations organisation, and the conduct of all combined operations for which troops were allocated.

Prior to Dunkirk the British had no operational requirement for an amphibious assault capability, though the foundation had been laid, on a low priority, for assaults of up to divisional size.

The changed strategic situation after Dunkirk meant that any offensive operations by army forces, other than in North Africa, would have to be amphibious in nature. The policy then outlined, as a supplement to the blockade, bombing, and subversion, envisaged the conduct of divisional-sized amphibious assaults, from the United Kingdom or the Middle East, against outlying areas where the enemy was weak. This policy, never fully developed, was expanded in early 1941 to encompass a corps-sized assault. Although some investigations into the return to the Continent in force were made, the limited combined operations policy remained basically unchanged until the American entry into the war.

A Directorate of Combined Operations was established in June 1940 to direct raiding operations on the enemy occupied coast and to provide advice to the Chiefs of Staff on combined operations. The Directorate was the cause of much controversy throughout this period, and was never fully integrated into the machinery for the direction of the war. Vague policies and inadequate directives, combined with organisational differences and personal conflicts, resulted in an expenditure of time and material resources that produced relatively meagre results.



In Memory of My Father  
Shipfitter Third Class Howard H. Steers USNR  
U.S.S. Bellona (ARL-32)

With Thanks to My Supervisor  
Dr. Michael L. Dockrill  
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# CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	07
CHAPTER I - COMBINED OPERATIONS PRIOR TO DUNKIRK	12
CHAPTER II - COMBINED OPERATIONS POLICY AND MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS	33
CHAPTER III - COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (1) The Appointment of Lieutenant General A.G. B. Bourne as Director of Combined Operations and the First Directive	57
CHAPTER IV - COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (2) The Appointment of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes as the Director of Combined Operations	78
CHAPTER V - THE JOINT PLANNING SYSTEM	90
CHAPTER VI - COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (3) The Draft Directive	100
CHAPTER VII - COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (4) The Second Directive	117
CHAPTER VIII - COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (5) The Amphibious Striking Force	131
CHAPTER IX - COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (6) The Appointment of Commodore Lord Louis Mountbatten as Adviser on Combined Operations and the Third Directive	142
CHAPTER X - COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (7) The Fourth Directive	169
CHAPTER XI - CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC (1) Eire	175
CHAPTER XII - OPERATION MENACE: THE ATTACK ON DAKAR	178
CHAPTER XIII - CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC (2) The Azores and Cape Verdes	187

	Page
CHAPTER XIV - OPERATION WORKSHOP: THE PLANNED ATTACK ON PANTELLERIA	237
CHAPTER XV - CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC (3) The Canaries	287
CHAPTER XVI - CONCLUSIONS	335
APPENDICES:	
A The First Directive of 17 June 1940	348
B The Draft Directive of 12 October 1940	351
C The Second Directive of 14 March 1941	354
D The Third Directive of 16 October 1941	357
E The Fourth Directive of 9 December 1941	360
F General Sir Leslie Hollis and the Relief of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes	364
G List of Abbreviations	365
BIBLIOGRAPHY	367

## INTRODUCTION

War is an intermittent experience in the profession of arms, and this poses some problems unique to the calling. Peace-time exercises are designed to simulate the conditions of uncertainty and stress to the maximum extent possible, but these measures must necessarily fall short of the mark. The character of war changes markedly over time and place, and particularly with the advance of technology, thus confounding most predictions. The nature of war remains remarkably stable, however, based as it is on that one constant - man. How man acts under stress, and how he takes decisions, are things that to a great extent can be imparted by a conscientious study of how these have been done in the past. It is on account of this that military history plays such an essential part in the development of the professional soldier. The first object of a work of military history must be, therefore, to explain what has transpired in the past, and why.

There are different aspects to the study of military history. Tactical histories, the basics of the profession, are relatively simple, the main emphasis being on an understanding of how men function under stress. Strategic histories are, in accord with the subject, much more complex. The higher direction of military operations fundamentally consists of the rational allocation and efficient use, in an organisational context, of scarce resources - men, material, and time. The main emphasis of strategic histories is the decision-taking process. As the number of alternatives increases, and the number of people involved in the process increases, so does the



complexity increase. An added complication, in both the taking and in the implementation of the decisions, is the often disparate interest of the organisations involved.

This dissertation, as the title indicates, falls into the strategic category. It is a study of the British organisation for combined operations, in the narrow sense of amphibious assaults, staged from the United Kingdom during the period from Dunkirk to Pearl Harbor. It will illustrate three main influences in the decision-taking process, serving thereby as a guide and as a warning to those who in the future partake in the formulation of strategy and force development.

The first influence, the rational, is normally presumed to be the basis for all decisions. A dispassionate study of the advantages and disadvantages of all relatively feasible courses of action, the process taught at all staff colleges, should result in a fairly clear choice, but this dissertation will point out many instances where this procedure was only a minor factor in the development of a combined operations policy and organisation, or in the conduct of combined operations. The second influence, the organisational, stems from the fact that decision-takers are members of existing organisations, each of which has its own interests to be taken into account. The organisational environment thus has a major effect on the process by which decisions are taken and carried out. The third influence, the individual, is perhaps the most variable. This dissertation will establish that organisational and personal influences, rather than rational, were often the deciding factors in decisions on combined

operations. In other situations the relative importance of these three influences will vary, and may be widely different from that presented here, but the student of military history will profit<sup>1</sup> herein by gaining an understanding of their inter-relationship.

There are a number of reasons for the selection of the period. Dunkirk saw a major change in the strategic situation of the United Kingdom, and posed a new problem of how, with limited resources, to wage offensive war against the enemy. There were three main pillars of grand strategy - the blockade, the strategic bombing campaign, and subversion - but the military also advocated the conduct of combined operations in outlying areas where the enemy was weak. This concept of a long-range, limited-scale combined operation was to be the basis of planning through the fall of 1941. Although some tentative studies were made on the material requirements for a return to the Continent, the concept, as evidenced by the preparation of papers for the Churchill-Roosevelt meeting in August 1941, was more along the lines of a 'mopping-up' operation to finish off an exhausted enemy. The entry of the Soviet Union into the war did little to change strategic planning because there was little expectation that she would hold out for any length of time. The entry of the United States into the war after Pearl Harbor thus marked the first major change in strategic planning since Dunkirk. The full expansion of American production now make larger combined operations, including a return to the Continent in force, feasible. All planning, however, was henceforth a combined British-American process. The period under study is thus distinctive, the 'British War' in its own right.

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1. Graham T. Allison, in his Essence of Decision-Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Boston, 1971), has provided three sophisticated models of policy-making which are very similar to the influences detailed above.



During this period a Directorate of Combined Operations was established, with both a raiding role and an advisory role on combined operations. This was a time of relative confusion and dispute, in which organisational and individual influences were most pronounced. The problems encountered with raiding policy caused the Directorate to become more and more involved with combined operations, with the directive establishing the organisation being modified constantly in an attempt to provide a workable system. This period virtually coincided with the tenure of one Director of Combined Operations, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes. It was with his replacement by Commodore Lord Louis Mountbatten, and with the change in the directive for the last time, that the Directorate of Combined Operations achieved the form that would carry it through to the Normandy invasion.

This dissertation, rather than giving a summary of all of the activities of the Directorate of Combined Operations, concentrates on three areas: the overall combined operations policy and material requirements, the organisational development of the Directorate, and all the combined operations during the period for which forces were actually assigned. These three areas fully detail the higher direction of combined operations, the decision-taking process by which resources were allocated and used. There are several related aspects of combined operations, listed below, that are not included, both because of space limitations and because they are not central to the thesis. Combined operations, for example, were also considered by theatre commands, but this was a separate process. Projected operations which did not entail the assignment of forces, of which there

were a number, took up a considerable amount of planning time, but were speculative matters of a different nature. Raiding operations, which comprised virtually all the operations actually conducted, were a major interest of the combined operations organisation, but were of a fundamentally lower order.<sup>2</sup> Training and material development are also topics of a similar category.

As organisations and forces do not simply spring out of the air, the dissertation will first examine the elements existing at the start of the period which went into the making of a combined operations policy. Combined operations policy and material requirements, which are closely inter-related, will then be detailed. The development of the combined operations organisation will next be covered, including the changes in personnel and directives. The manner in which all combined operations for which troops were detailed were planned will be the last area examined.

The study has been made primarily through the records written at the time. Although these may be an imperfect reflection of the thoughts and discussions of those involved, in a bureaucratic sense the memoranda and minutes are the history, for it was these pieces of paper which produced action within the service machinery. The number of secondary sources that comment on the organisational aspect of combined operations is extremely small, and these sources often prove unreliable. The latter is also true of the memories of those individuals involved in the organisation who are still living.

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2. For an account of raiding forces and operations during this period, see CPT H.J. Steers, Raiding the Continent: The Origins of British Special Service Forces, MMAS, U.S. Army Command & General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 1980.



## CHAPTER I

### COMBINED OPERATIONS PRIOR TO DUNKIRK

Amphibious operations, traditionally considered a British specialty, had in reality been a neglected subject before the outbreak of the Second World War. The strategic planners, prior to the war, could conceive of no contingency in which a major opposed landing would be required, and the Air Ministry, in particular, doubted that, with the advent of airpower, such operations would even be feasible. That perennial bugbear of British defence policy, the shortage of funds, also lent weight to the arguments that any forces dedicated to combined operations would be uneconomic.

A modicum of work had nevertheless been carried out in regard to combined operations, and it was to prove just enough to give the British the basis for an amphibious capability at the time when it would really be needed. A Manual on Combined Operations<sup>1</sup> had been published in 1925, and had been twice updated. The outlines of a doctrine had been sketched out by an Inter-Services Training and Development Centre (ISTDC) founded at Eastney on 15 September 1938.<sup>2</sup> This Centre was commanded by Captain L.E.H. Maund, RN, and had on its staff Major M.W.M. MacLeod, Royal Artillery, two men who would be closely associated with the development of the amphibious<sup>3</sup> capability throughout the early war period. The ISTDC had developed designs for an Assault Landing Craft (ALC), a small armoured

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1. L.E.H. Maund, Assault from the Sea (London 1949). pp.3-4 and Amphibious Warfare Headquarters, Combined Operations Organisation 1940-1945 (London 1956), p.9.
  2. DCOS(IT) 2 Mtg 7 Jul 38, CAB 13/12 and DCOS(IT) 9 'Memorandum-Instructions for Training and Development Centre' 20 Jul 38, CAB 54/13.
  3. Maund, P. 7. The early days of the ISTDC are well covered in this book.

craft capable of carrying 36 soldiers, a Support Landing Craft (SLC), basically an ALC modified with machine guns and mortars for smoke bombs, and a Motor Landing Craft (MLC), capable of carrying a 14-ton tank. Merchant shipping of the Glen class had been identified as suitable for conversion to carriers for the ALC and SLC, and some L.N.E.R. railway ferries were considered for conversion to MLC carriers.

The ISTDC reported to the Deputy Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee (DCOS), through the Deputy Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee on Inter-Service Training (DCOS(IT)), composed of the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (ACNS), the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (DMO&I), and the Deputy Chief of Air Staff (DCAS). The DCOS (IT) had requested, on 28 March 1939, that the ISTDC report on the material and time required to mount a combined operation.<sup>4</sup> Maund replied on 11 May 1939 that a brigade assault would require 26 ALC, 4 SLC, and 18 MLC, which could be constructed in four months if given priority status. The conversion of the shipping would take six months, though this could be cut in half if the davits required were procured beforehand.

The DCOS(IT) thought that this period was too long, taking the matter up with the DCOS.<sup>5</sup> Although there were still no combined operations in the war plans, the DCOS noted that the Turks, with whom the British might be allied in the event of war, were considering an operation against the Dodecanese. The DCOS therefore thought that it would only be prudent to take some reasonable precautions,

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4. DCOS(IT) 6 Mtg 28 Mar 39, CAB 54/12.

5. DCOS(IT) 7 Mtg 11 May 39, CAB 54/12.



and approved, on 10 July 1939, the construction of 18 ALC, 2 SLC, and 12 MLC. The remainder of the ALC and SLC could be constructed when an operation was decided upon, and 6 old MLC, ordered at the time of the Abyssinian crisis and delivered in 1938, would complete the brigade packet.<sup>6</sup> This would not reduce the time required to mount an operation, a fact recognised by the DCOS on 10 August 1939 when they agreed to procure the davits.<sup>7</sup> The policy was thus set that the British should be capable of mounting a brigade-sized operation on three months' notice.

The material actually on hand at the outbreak of the war was rather meagre. A total of 9 old MLC and 23 horse barges were in the United Kingdom, with a further 2 horse barges at Malta. Two prototype ALC were undergoing trials and the prototype of the ISTDC's MLC was under construction. No troops had yet been trained, or even earmarked, for amphibious operations. A Royal Marine Brigade of four battalions had been proposed by the Committee set up under Admiral Sir Charles Madden in 1923 to determine the function of the Royal Marine Corps, created that year by the amalgamation of the Royal Marine Light Infantry and Royal Marine Artillery, but financial stringencies had prevented any implementation of the Committee's recommendation.<sup>8</sup> Aside from the Dodecanese, combined operations seem improbable, and no contingency plans had been prepared. There was nothing that could be described as a combined operations

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6. DCOS(IT) 35 'The Situation as Regards Material and Personnel for Landing Attacks' 30 Jun 39, CAB 54/13 and DCOS 49 Mtg 10 Jul 39, CAB 54/2.

7. DCOS 48 Mtg 10 Aug 39, CAB 54/2.

8. The Background of the Algamation is covered in K. J. Clifford's unpublished manuscript On Parallel Courses - An Analysis of British and American Amphibious (Combined) Operations 1920-1945, pp. 13-38

organisation. All this, considering the military situation on the Continent, was perfectly acceptable at that time.

The outbreak of the war lent little urgency to the preparations for combined operations. Despite a ruling in June 1939 that the experience of the staff of the ISTDC should be used in the planning sections of their service departments, the improbability of any combined operation resulted in all except MacLeod being sent off on other duties. The War Office could find no suitable post for MacLeod, so he continued to carry out the ISTDC programme. At a DCOS meeting on 19 September 1939, the DCNS agreed to return Maund to the ISTDC as soon as his other duties were completed.<sup>9</sup> This was soon forgotten, and it was not until 15 December 1939 that the status of the ISTDC was formally reviewed. The DCOS(IT) then agreed that, rather than having the staff of the Centre dispersed to the planning sections of their respective service departments, the ISTDC should continue in being. The Admiralty was again requested to return Maund. The RAF, never much concerned with amphibious warfare, obtained agreement that a permanent RAF officer was not required at the ISTDC. It promised to make arrangements, however, for an officer from a nearby headquarters to be 'affiliated' to the Centre.<sup>10</sup>

The ISTDC had issued a situation report on 10 September 1939. Plans for the operations against the Dodecanese, on which the ISTDC had been tasked to assist, had been sent to the planning staffs, but no new tasks had been assigned. The ISTDC proposed setting up one-week courses for officers from the three services. Trials with the new equipment were continuing, but a problem first broached

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9. Maund, pp. 20-23 and DCOS(39) 6 Mtg 19 Sep 39, CAB 82/1.

10. DCOS(IT)(39) 1 Mtg 15 Dec 39, CAB 82/22.



by Maund in March 1939 had not been resolved. When the ISTDC had first been established, as an experimental centre, no thought had been given to an organisation for landing craft. The assumption apparently was that they would be organic to their carrier ships. There was now a considerable amount of equipment on hand at the ISTDC, and, with the arrival of the landing craft ordered for the first 'packet', the question of accommodation and maintenance would become urgent. The craft would either have to be dispersed among the naval dockyards or would have to be stored in civilian facilities. The ISTDC thought that it would be more economic and efficient to keep them at one centre. It also wanted to retain control of the landing craft, a feasible action considering the numbers involved. With the approval of the ACNS on 24 October 1939, the Admiralty started negotiating with civilian dockyards near the ISTDC, though it did not consider the establishment of a permanent base<sup>11</sup> either necessary or desirable at the time.

The general utility of the ALC was soon recognised by the ISTDC, which noted on 20 November 1939 that, in spite of the orders<sup>12</sup> placed, there would never really be enough of them. By early December the inability of the builders to deliver the landing craft on schedule, a major and constantly recurring problem, was becoming painfully evident. The initial problem centered around the provision of armour plate, and the builders suggested that an even greater delay might be avoided if the remaining craft of the brigade 'packet' were ordered immediately, before the sub-contractors switched to other work.

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11. DCOS(IT)(39) 8 'Note by Secretary on ISTDC Situation Report of 10 Sep 39' 28 Oct 39, CAB 82/22;  
DCOS(IT)(39) 4 'Report by ISTDC' 16 Oct 39; and DCOS(IT)(39) 7 'Memorandum by ACNS' 24 Oct 39, CAB 82/22.
  12. DCOS(IT)(39) 12 'Memorandum by Commandant ISTDC: Assaulting Landing Craft' 20 Nov 39, CAB 82/22.

The delivery of the 18 ALC already on order would take place from February until the end of May 1940, and that of the 12 MLC from March until July 1940.<sup>13</sup>

About the beginning of December 1939 the DNC reported to the Admiralty that the conversion of the L.N.E.R. ferries appeared to be feasible. This and most of the matters noted above were considered by the DCOS(IT) at their first wartime meeting on 15 December 1939. They did little more than to review the ISTDC's progress in various areas. The main results of the meeting were the formalisation of the ISTDC's status, a request to the Admiralty to prepare plans for the conversion of the L.N.E.R. ferries, and the recommendation to the DCOS that orders be placed for the remainder of the brigade 'packet', 8 ALC and 2 SLC. The committee also noted the investigation into<sup>14</sup> the problem of landing craft storage and maintenance.

The first steps had also been taken to provide a body of troops for the combined operations. In late September 1939 the Adjutant General Royal Marines (AGRM), Lieutenant General A.G.B. Bourne, produced a paper recommending the formation of a Royal Marine Brigade of three battalions, along the lines of Admiral Madden's original proposal. This was approved on 19 October, but the actual formation of the brigade would take some considerable time. The Royal Marines had started the war at a strength of 12,390, with only 1,082 more men in the Royal Fleet Reserve, and the entire Corps was almost wholly committed to sea-going requirements. The Royal Marines were also forming a Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation (MNBDO), which had

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13. DCOS(IT)(39) 15 'Report by ISTDC: Dates of Completion of Landing Craft' 14 Dec 39, CAB 32/22.

14. DCOS(IT)(39) 1 Mtg 15 Dec 39, CAB 32/22.



priority over the requirements of the new brigade. The brigade, including the officers, would consequently have to be formed from scratch. Bourne interviewed each officer candidate personally, and the officer training started on 1 December 1939. The full brigade was not scheduled to be combat-ready until the end of June 1940. After the formation of the brigade had been decided upon, the new commander, Brigadier A.C. St. Clair Morford, and his key commanders and staff officers met at Eastney for a conference. The function of the brigade was seen as raiding, in operations involving the entire brigade. The recommendation was therefore made that a fourth battalion was required to secure the beach while the other three operated inland. The First Lord, Churchill, approved this and by December 1940 a fourth battalion was added. The battalions themselves were also slightly enlarged, the total strength of the brigade being finally set at 113 officers and 2,545 other ranks, with a ten percent reserve.<sup>15</sup>

The first formal principles for the employment of the brigade were framed by Rear Admiral T.S.V. Phillips, the DCNS, in a memorandum on 22 December 1940. He made the distinction between a large scale combined operation on the lines of Tanga or Gallipoli, with the extensive preparation time required, and limited raiding operations carried out at night on selected points along the enemy coast. While the former might or might not take place, the latter was something for which preparations should be undertaken immediately. The Royal Marine Brigade would be the ideal standing force for such raids, and the equipment needed for this role would not conflict with the requirements of the other services. Phillips made the significant

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15. 'Interview with General Sir A.G.B. Bourne KCB DSO MVO' 4 Aug 42, DEFE 2/699; 'Provisional War Establishment of RM Brigade' 15 Dec 39, ADM 1/10334; Interview with Maj. Gen. J.L. Moulton by Author 10 Nov 78.

point that the brigade should not be strictly an Admiralty responsibility. It should be closely associated with the ISTDC and, although the administration would remain with the Admiralty, the general<sup>16</sup> development of the brigade should be fostered by the DCOS. The War Office supported this concept, although it foresaw an additional role for the brigade as a nucleus to assist in the training of army units which might be made available for combined operations. With this eventual participation of army units in mind, it also thought that special material might be provided on a larger scale than previously envisaged. Sufficient material for a two-brigade landing was a reasonable figure, as this would constitute the assault force of a<sup>17</sup> division. Many of the underlying concepts of the later responsibilities of the combined operations organisation are readily apparent in these proposals.

Strengthened by this joint backing, the proposals were considered by the DCOS on 3 January 1940. The DCOS thought that an organisation such as the Royal Marine Brigade, which could be used at comparatively short notice 'for any suitable operation which might be projected', would be 'of great value'. They agreed that the close association of the brigade with the ISTDC would be a great assistance in its training and in the development of its equipment, and that such matters should come under the supervision of the DCOS(IT). The DCOS were aware that the landing craft on order were not being produced as quickly as had been hoped, and that the DCOS(IT) were preparing a recommendation, then awaiting detailed costing, that the remainder of the craft for the brigade 'nacket' be ordered. The DCOS(IT) were instructed to determine if there was any possibility of accelerating the production of the craft ordered, and were also to consider the

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16. DCOS(39) 67 'Offensive Operations' 22 Dec 39, CAB 82/4.

17. WO Brief on DCOS(39) 67 2 Jan 40, WO 193/378.



desirability of ordering 'forthwith' enough landing craft to enable<sup>18</sup>  
an operation to be undertaken by two brigades simultaneously.

By 26 January 1940 the ISTDC had reported that it was not possible to hasten the construction of the craft. If the remaining craft of the first brigade 'packet' were ordered then, or in the near future, they could be ready by August 1940. If a second 'packet' was ordered at the same time its ALC and SLC would be ready by October 1940. and<sup>19</sup> its MLC by December 1940. On 30 January 1940 the secretary of the DCOS(IT) was spurred to action. Each day's delay would cause a corresponding delay in delivery. If the DCOS waited for the DCOS(IT) formal report further delays would ensue, and, as the DCOS(IT) had agreed at their meeting over six weeks before that the remainder of the first packet should be ordered, the secretary brought the matter up directly with the DCOS at their meeting of 1 February 1940. The DCOS accepted this irregular procedure, and decided to order the 8 ALC and 2 SLC, so that the pre-war principle of three months lead time could be adhered to. As it was, the services would not be pre-<sup>20</sup>pared for an operation before August 1940.

The DCOS(IT) held their first, and only, meeting of 1940 on 1 February, immediately after the DCOS meeting. The DCOS(IT), in regard to the question of a second brigade packet, felt unable to make any recommendation on strategic grounds, as this was an area outside their competence. It was noted that the original 'packet'

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18. DCOS(40) 1 Mtg 3 Jan 40, CAB 82/2 and DCOS(IT)(40) 1 'Preparations for a Sea-Borne Expedition' 5 Jan 40, CAB 82/23.

19. DCOS(IT)(40) 8 'Preparations for a Sea-Borne Expedition' 26 Jan 40, CAB 82/23.

20. DCOS(IT)(40) 10 'Preparations for a Sea-Borne Expedition' 30 Jan 40, CAB 82/23; DCOS(40) 17 Note by Secretary 30 Jan 40, CAB 82/5; and DCOS(40) 4 Mtg 1 Feb 40, CAB 82/2.

was only sufficient for a lift of two battalions, with no provision for a reserve force or replacements for casualties among the craft. In addition St. Clair-Morford had since expressed his opinion that there might be times when all four of his battalions would have to be in the craft simultaneously. The DCOS(IT) therefore thought it advisable, as a minimum, to order the ALC and SLC for an additional two battalions, so that the full employment of the Royal Marine Brigade would be possible. No extra MLC would be needed for the Royal Marines, though this would not be the case if a lift of four battalions of two army brigades, as part of a division assault, was contemplated. They thought that it might be useful to order the additional 18 MLC, as they took a long time to build and future events could not be foretold, but there were considerations affecting such a decision that were, again, outside the sphere of the DCOS(IT). These recommendations were sent to the DCOS ON 10 February 1940 in the form of a report on the preparations for a sea-borne expedition. After August the possibility of a combined operation by one brigade would exist. The limiting factor would then be the conversion of the shipping, which could be done in three months.<sup>21</sup> The pre-war principle could thus be adhered to. The report was considered on 14 February 1940 by the DCOS. Since the necessity for a two-brigade landing might apparently arise at any time from the spring on, the DCOS approved the order of a complete 'packet' for a second brigade, i.e. 26 ALC, 4 SLC, and 18 MLC. There was little discussion on the subject, and no indication where the DCOS thought a combined operation likely.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, a major step had been

21 DCOS(IT)(40) 1 Mtg 1 Feb 40, CAB 82/23 and DCOS(40) 24 'Preparations for a Sea-Borne Expedition' 10 Feb 40, CAB 82/5.

22 DCOS(40) 8 Mtg 14 Feb 40, CAB 82/2 and DCOS(IT)(40) 23 'Memorandum by ACNS' 27 Apr 40, CAB 82/23.



taken.

The ISTDC, after the second 'brigade packet' was approved, was faced with a marked expansion of its landing craft fleet. On 15 February 1940 it therefore raised again the questions of the accommodation and maintenance of the craft. It maintained that a complete landing craft base was urgently needed, with suitable beaches and good tactical training areas, accommodation for equipment, crews, and troops in training, anchorage for craft, and accessibility to military commands. Hayling Island, with its holiday camp at Northney, filled all of the requirements. It was proposed that a base be established there under a Commander RN, with 8 officers and 289 ratings. These would include permanent crews for 30 ALC and SLC and 8 MLC, with coxwains and maintenance personnel for the others. The remaining crew members, it was rather optimistically assumed, could be trained once an operation was decided upon. The MLC, for example, could be commissioned 6 weeks prior to the actual date of the operation. The inconsistency of this idea with a principle espoused in the same paper, that the landing craft crews must be a corps d'élite similar to the assault troops, was not remarked upon. The base commander would receive direction from the ISTDC. The ISTDC asked for a target date of 1 May 1940 for the requisition of the areas and the completion of the work necessary.<sup>23</sup> No mention of an organisation for the operational employment of the craft was made in this paper, though Maund put forward the idea of a 'pool' in a memorandum of 23 March 1940. This memorandum also brought to light the problems of the bureaucracy of the period. Although the DCOS had

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23. DCOS(IT)(40) 14 'Provision for Accommodation and Permanent Crews for Landing Craft and Other Material' 15 Mar 40, CAB 82/23.

urgently decided to order a second 'packet' on 14 February, by 23 March 1940 the Treasury had not signed a contract with the builders.

The intention of maintaining the landing craft and troops as a standing force was soon to conflict with that constant plague of planners, the diversion of the craft to other uses. A new allocation of landing craft to the Royal Marine battalions now had to be made, owing to the somewhat belated realisation of the ISTDC that the Royal Marine battalions contained a higher proportion of combat troops than similar army units. This was academic if all the landing craft were held in a pool, but the first of many other demands for the craft had already been received. Some MLC were requested for the Mediterranean, and a further group was to go to the Royal Marine Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation. Should such a dispersal of the pool take place the capability for combined operations would be seriously im-  
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paired.

This question of landing craft allocation was considered by the DCOS on 27 March 1940. The concept of the pool was formally accented, and it was agreed that other requests should be regarded as separate commitments. If any diversion of craft from the pool was urgently required replacements for them should be procured. Strangely, no other landing craft were ordered for these other commitments until much later. This well-intentioned decision itself served to cause problems later, as it had the rather unfortunate effect of producing a piecemeal approach to the planning of overall future requirements for craft. When coupled with the constant delays in production, this was  
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to have a detrimental effect on both training and operations to 1941.

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24. DCOS(40) 46 'Note by Secretary: Allocation of Landing Craft' 23 Mar 40, CAB 82/5.

25. DCOS(40) 14 Mtg 27 Mar 40, CAB 82/2. ✓



The ISTDC was still working on the conversion of merchantmen. The four Glen class ships, earmarked before the war as the most suitable, had been taken up and converted for use as supply ships for Operation CATHERINE, the passage of a naval force into the Baltic. On 9 March 1940 the ISTDC noted that four ships of the Dunnottar<sup>26</sup> Castle class had been chosen for conversion. After CATHERINE was cancelled, further discussions were held with the DNC and the Board of Trade, and on 22 April 1940 the ISTDC reported that the Glen class ships had once again been earmarked. These ships could not use their original davits, and so the 30 on order could be used to fit only two ships with 12 each, leaving 6 for perhaps a third ship of the class. Besides the 12 ALC, each ship could carry 1 MLC, which would be hoisted out by a derrick. The remaining half of the ALC and SLC would have to be carried by large liners, of which 17 were considered suitable. Of these 7 could also hoist a MLC. The remaining MLC could probably be carried by 3 L.N.E.R. ferries, each of which if converted could carry 14 MLC. Experiments on the feasibility of this conversion had been postponed, as the only MLC available had been sent off to Norway. As the Royal Marine Brigade would reach the advanced training stage by September 1940, the conversion of at least one Glen ship and one L.N.E.R. ferry was urged so that training could be conducted with assault shipping. Once an operation was decided upon the other con-<sup>27</sup> versions could be accomplished and the appropriate liners taken up.

The ISTDC memorandum also noted that 4 ALC, 1 new MLC and 5 of

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26. DCOS(IT)(40) 18 'Note by Secretary: Davits for Assault Landing Craft' 9 Mar 40, CAB 82/23.

27. DCOS(IT)(40) 22 'Memorandum by ISTDC: Proposals for Carrying and Launching Landing Craft' 22 Apr 40, CAB 82/23.

the old MLC had been taken from the pool for use in Norway, and, in accordance with the DCOS decision on the pool, it requested that replacement craft be ordered. By 13 May 1940 no action had been taken on these recommendations. The actions in Norway had shown the great utility of the landing craft, but there were further production difficulties. The davits were being completed faster than expected, but it was found that the sub-contractors for the landing craft did not have priority for Admiralty work. The primary contractors had only been given priority on the first 'packet', and the second 'packet' had no priority at all. Thorneycroft had determined that if they could modify the original MLC design, eliminating the armoured deck and using American engines, the MLC could be produced at a faster rate. The ISTDC consequently recommended that priority be given to all the landing craft on order. It urged again that the landing craft sent to Norway be replaced, and in view of the proven utility of the MLC it suggested that an additional 24 of the modified MLC be ordered. In addition to this, the conversion of 2 Glen ships should begin at once, and a liner be made available for trials in carrying an ALC. 28

This memorandum took some time to be digested at the Admiralty, and it was not until 1 June 1940 that the ACNS stated their position. This, of course, reflected the crisis in France; Britain was in imminent danger, and it was vital to 'guard against dissipating the limited productive capacity' on requirements that were not essential to the immediate war effort. The interference of allocated priorities



would furthermore lead to a dislocation of all programmes, and could not be justified. 'unless some very definite operation involving the use of a large number of landing craft' was envisaged in the near future. The Admiralty could not therefore agree to either a change in priorities or to additional orders.

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MacLeod replied to this the following day. Realising the validity of the Admiralty's position, he asked that the construction of landing craft nevertheless be continued as actively as possible. The Germans had made the most of surprise and unorthodox methods, and the possession of landing craft by the United Kingdom would enable it to do likewise with its seapower, by striking at a critical moment at unexpected and vulnerable points in the enemy's defences. MacLeod emphasised the suitability of landing craft for cross-Channel raids. With these ideas in mind he revised the previous programme suggested by the ISTDC. He proposed that the ALC and SLC programme should proceed as at present, though 5 ALC should be added to replace Dunkirk losses. The 4 MLC then in Norway should be returned to enable the Royal Marine Brigade to train. It was still considered that the additional 24 MLC would not greatly interfere with other production. Although the conversions of the Glen ships and the L.N.E.R. ferry would have to be reviewed the trials with the liner should proceed. This proposal went unanswered, and further action would be held in abeyance pending the establishment of the new combined operations organisation.

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Throughout the beginning of 1940 the War Office, faced with its

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29. DCOS(IT)(40) 28 'Memorandum by ACNS(T): Production and Priority of Construction of Landing Craft' 1 Jun 40, CAB 82/23.

30. DCOS(IT)(40) 29 'Memorandum by ISTDC: Landing Craft' 2 Jun 40, CAB 82/23.

involvement in the formation of the Royal Marine Brigade and with the possibility of employing up to two army brigades in combined operations, attempted to establish policies concerning responsibilities and missions. The formation of the Royal Marine Brigade was causing some problems. There had apparently been a lack of communication between the Admiralty and the War Office on it. As late as February 1940 the War Office was still unsure of its organisation, the composition of its personnel, and its availability for roles other than combined operations, all of which had a bearing on the equipment the War Office would have to provide for the brigade. The War Office view was that, if the brigade was composed of new recruits, the limited equipment available would be better used if given to the nearly fully trained territorial divisions; if the brigade was composed of mainly regulars or reservists it would, of course, be another matter. The question was also posed as to why the full scale of war equipment was desired by 1 July, if the landing craft were not to be ready until the end of August.<sup>31</sup>

St. Clair-Morford met some representatives of the War Office on 1 March 1940 to resolve some of these problems. During this meeting he listed the functions of the brigade. The primary function was to raid the enemy coast - 'tip and run' affairs of a few hours, rather than days, followed by combined operations and co-operation with field army, in that order. As the brigade was to be organised and trained for its primary function it would carry nothing that

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31. 'Notes for Representative at Meeting 1 March 1940 on Royal Marine Brigade' 29 Feb 40, WO 193/378.



could not fit into an ALC. Further equipment and training would be required before it would be able to undertake any other type of operation. The Brigade would be ready, as scheduled, by 1 August, though an additional month for training would be desirable. July was thus a realistic date for the provision of equipment, as the brigade could be 'crashed ashore' without the use of landing craft in an emergency. This meeting is well illustrative of the problems of communication encountered during this period where inter-service co-operation for combined operations was concerned.<sup>32</sup>

Such an emergency operation was to take place earlier than expected, for the German occupation of Norway on 9 April caused the War Cabinet to look to the safety of Iceland and the Faeroes. The Faeroes were occupied on 13 April 1940, apparently by ships' detachments of Royal Marines. They were relieved by army troops on 23 May 1940. The War Cabinet did not decide to occupy Iceland until 6 May 1940. A reinforced battalion, 2nd Battalion, Royal Marines, from the Royal Marine Brigade was hurriedly loaded onto two cruisers at Greenock, and sailed for Iceland on 8 May 1940. The force landed unopposed at Reykjavik on 10 May 1940, so swiftly that the German Consulate was seized before any papers could be destroyed. Ten days<sup>33</sup> later the Royal Marines were relieved by a Canadian army brigade. Although these first operations were successful, from a planning point of view they could 'only be described as disastrous'. When the question of occupying Iceland was raised the Foreign Office sought the opinion of the three service departments separately, rather than going

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32. 'Note on Royal Marine Brigade' 2 Mar 40, WO 193/378.

33. Captain S.W. Roskill RN, The War at Sea, Vol 1 (London 1954), p. 345; J.R.R. Butler, Grand Strategy, Vol II (London 1957), p. 128; and Colonel K. J. Clifford, The U.S. Marines in Iceland 1941-1942 (Washington 1970), p.1

to the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COS) or the Joint Planning Sub-Committee (JPSC). The Admiralty unilaterally worked out a plan and started embarking the Royal Marines. The formal proposal was given to the War Cabinet by the Admiralty on 6 May 1940, who then approved it and referred it to the JPSC. The Air Staff Director of Plans, Air Commodore J.C. Slessor, supported by others, thought the plan presented was 'a thoroughly bad one' and the force allotted 'quite inadequate for its tasks'. As the troops were already embarking and the plan had been disseminated there was very little that could be done about it. Slessor could only remonstrate to the VCAS about the 'totally unsound and dangerous' procedure that had been used. The matter was raised with the other service departments by the VCAS, and promises were made that there would be more consultation in the future.<sup>34</sup>

The opening of the Norwegian theatre of war had a number of effects on the ISTDC. Maund was immediately whisked away to be the chief of staff to the naval commander for the assault on Narvik, while MacLeod became deeply involved in the preparations for HAMMER, an assault on Trondheim. All the available landing craft - 4 ALC and 6 MLC - were sent off with the expedition to Narvik.<sup>35</sup> An opposed landing, from ship to shore, was made at Bjerkvik on 12-13 May 1940. A total of 4 ALC and 3 MLC were actually used in this assault, which also included the landing of tanks. This was to be used as a strong argument for the feasibility of opposed landings, and was to provide some small 'lessons learned'. The arrangements had been a local responsibility, however, and the service machinery in the United Kingdom had not really been involved. It was rather ironic, too, that in spite of the War Office's past interest in combined operations,

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34. Slessor to VCAS 7 May 40, Slessor Papers 1 J. As the Committee of Imperial Defence was defunct the COS was no longer a sub-committee. The JPSC is the old JPC.

35. Maund, n. 24 and 37.



this first actual assault landing of the war was carried out not by British troops, but by elements of the 13eme Demi-Brigade of the French Foreign Legion, at the instigation of the French general directing land operations in the Narvik area. A further opposed landing, using 3 ALC and 2 MLC for a shore-to-shore movement, was carried out by the same legionnaires on 28 May to capture Narvik<sup>36</sup> itself. During the later withdrawal from Norway all the surviving landing craft, 3 ALC and 1 MLC, were lost during an attempt to tow them back to the United Kingdom.

Planning co-ordination in the United Kingdom for the combined operations aspect of the Norwegian campaign had been no more efficient than that for the later Iceland occupation. The rank structure between the army and navy was unbalanced, the naval commander was only given verbal instructions, and the army commander was given written instructions that did not conform to the naval commander's. The two commanders neither planned nor made the journey to Norway together in the same ship. This aspect of the campaign is well covered by the major histories. Maund was later to note that 'most of the principles governing command which had stood in the Combined Operations Manual for so many years had been broken', and that 'it would have been a miracle, personalities aside, if such a scheme of command had worked harmoniously'.<sup>37</sup>

After his experience with Operation HAMMER, MacLeod submitted on 10 May 1940 a recommendation for the establishment of a strategic

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36. See Maund for the best account of these landings. Buckley gives them in outline, and Roskill omits even the date of the first assault.

37. Maund, pp. 29-30.

reserve of one division for combined operations. The time required to prepare an expedition would thus be reduced, and future German initiatives such as those in Norway more readily countered. The size of this reserve was based on the number of landing craft on order, i.e., sufficient for a two brigade assault. MacLeod suggested that the division might be formed from the Royal Marine Brigade, the 184th Infantry Brigade, which had already been associated with the ISTDC on certain matters, and a third infantry brigade, with the addition of a regiment of 3.7" howitzers, the only type of artillery that would fit into a landing craft.<sup>38</sup> The War Office did not fully agree with this scheme. MO 1 thought it excellent in theory, but there were so many prior commitments for the limited resources available that it would be impossible to put it into effect for some time to come. In particular it would interfere with the movement of the third contingent to France. The opinion of MO 2 was similar, though it thought that it might be preferable to build up a new division staff rather than, as proposed, earmark a committed one. MO 2 was also concerned that the Admiralty representatives in the force must be permanent ones, not liable to be snatched away on another project, such as had twice happened to Maund. The staff Duties (SD) section stressed that the troops must be thoroughly trained soldiers before they could start training in combined operations. The difficulty was that as soon as this stage was reached under the present programmes the formations were scheduled to proceed overseas and the whole system, including the plan for issuing equipment, was regulated to that end. It was therefore a question either of retaining permanently in the United Kingdom a

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38 DCOS(40) 67 'Note by Secretary: Combined Operations' 10 May 40, CAB 82/5.



division once it was trained in combined operations, or of attempting to train a succession of divisions. In any case the 184th Infantry Brigade was a low priority unit and should not be included. The general War Office agreement that a division could not be spared at that time from the mobilisation scheme, and that reliance must therefore be placed on the Royal Marine Brigade, was summed up in the War Office brief on the proposal for the DCOS meeting of 15 May 1940.<sup>39</sup> The DCOS concurred that the suggestion had much to recommend it, but was not practicable at that time. They directed that the DCOS(IT) study the proposal with a view to its reconsideration in the autumn. Some of the detailed suggestions MacLeod had made, concerning such things as the provision of maps and air photos, were referred to the service departments for consideration if a combined operation had to be conducted in the interim.<sup>40</sup>

The ISTDC then sent off all the landing craft completed since the start of the Norwegian campaign under a Commander Cassidi to assist in the evacuation from Dunkirk. The carrier ship, the Clan MacAlister, was sunk on the first run, before all the landing craft were even hoisted out, but the surviving craft did yeoman work off the beaches at La Panne and Dunkirk, ferrying troops directly back to the Kent coast. During the evacuations 6 ALC and 1 MLC were lost.

39. Memoranda MO 1 to SD 1 11 May 40, MO 2 to MO 1 14 May 40, SD 1(a) to MO 1 14 May 40, and WO Brief on DCOS(40) 67 15 May 40, WO 193/378.

40. DCOS(40) 22 Mtg 15 May 40, CAB 82/2.

## CHAPTER II

### COMBINED OPERATIONS POLICY AND MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

With the loss, in Norway and at Dunkirk, of the 10 ALC and 7 MLC, only 6 ALC and 1 MLC were left in service, and these, badly battered, were scattered throughout the Channel ports. There were 36 ALC, 8 SLC, and 27 MLC still under construction.<sup>1</sup> The handful of landing craft had proven their worth on operations, though the cost had been high. It soon became clear that the main bottleneck to the combined operations programme then in the process of development would be a shortage of landing craft. When the secretariat informed the COS that the War Office was thinking in terms of 260 landing craft, rather than 96,<sup>2</sup> a change in outlook was apparent. At a COS meeting on 17 June 1940, it was agreed that the construction of landing craft on order would be accelerated 'to the maximum degree possible'. It was then suggested that 'in anticipation of the detailed War Office statement of future requirements an order should be placed now for, say, 150 landing craft'. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Admiralty would place the order 'as soon as possible' for a further 150 landing craft 'in the same proportion of types as craft now on order',<sup>3</sup> these apparently also to be given priority. After the painstaking discussions of the first nine months of the war over a

1. These figures vary slightly from Maund, p. 62, but are taken from COS(40) 470 'Memorandum by General Bourne: Offensive Operations' 18 Jun 40, CAB 80/13, which is most probably the correct one as far as losses are concerned. Even this document has some discrepancies in regard to the number of MLC on order. Documents throughout this period give conflicting numbers in regard to landing craft, and it has generally been assumed that the numbers in the COS minutes are correct. For a description of the Dunkirk operations see B. Fergusson, The Watery Maze (New York 1961), p. 44.
2. COS(40) 464 'Note by Secretary: Landing Craft' 15 Jun 40, CAB 80/13.
3. COS(40) 184 Mtg 17 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.



handful of craft, this was a sweeping order. The fact that this was the day that France capitulated may have had something to do with the haste of this decision.

Lieutenant General A.G.B. Bourne, the newly appointed Director of Combined Operations, provided a breakdown of the requirements, on 18 June 1940, which was accepted by the COS. The Royal Marine Brigade would need 48 ALC, 8 SLC, and 12 MLC, while the proposed army brigade group would require 52 ALC, 8 SLC, and 36 MLC. A reserve, of 8 ALC and 2 SLC, was included, for the first time, and a further 50 MLC were allocated to the Mediterranean. Requirements also existed for 100 raiding craft. The design for these had not been determined, although a suitable craft, the Higgins 'Eureka', termed an 'R' Craft, was eventually bought from the United States.

Bourne also requested that all four Glen class ships be converted, this being agreed to by the COS pending Admiralty priorities. The Glenroy, Glenearn, and Glengyle were soon taken up for conversion to Landing Ships Infantry, Large (LSI(L)). The fourth Glen ship was retained by the Admiralty to run supplies to Malta, and was lost in that service. As a substitute, two smaller Dutch passenger ships, the Queen Emma and Princess Beatrix, were converted to Landing Ships Infantry, Medium (LSI(M)). Bourne also secured agreement for the conversion of two L.N.E.R. ferries, to be named Iris and Daffodil,<sup>4</sup> to carry 15 MLC each. Sometime later agreement was also given for the conversion of six small Belgian cross-channel packets to Landing Ships Infantry, Small (LSI(S)), for raiding operations.

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4. COS(40) 470 'Memorandum by Lt. Gen. Bourne' 18 Jun 40, CAB 80/13 and COS(40) 187 Mtg 20 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.

Churchill's interest in landing tanks onto beaches, noted in a memorandum of 5 June 1940, resulted in the development of a further type of landing craft. In late June or early July 1940 he directly approached the Minister of Supply concerning this problem, outlining his demands for a vessel to transport six or seven heavy tanks on a sea voyage, and land them across a beach.<sup>5</sup> This was referred to the Admiralty, who in some way construed this requirement to mean a landing craft capable to carrying three heavy tanks. The DNC, in collaboration with the ISTDC, quickly produced a design for a Tank Landing Craft (TLC), which had a displacement of 310 tons and a range of 1,100 miles. It was not a decked vessel, however, and had poor sea keeping qualities, as well as no accommodation for the crew. It was also designed for the average beach slope in the United Kingdom, 1 in 30, as no study had apparently been made of the beaches in France, which had a slope of 1 in 200. It is difficult to determine what operational requirements were considered when it was designed, for it was suitable neither for short-range cross-Channel operations nor for long-range expeditions overseas. A total of 30 were ordered in June 1940, the first production craft undergoing trials in November 1940.<sup>6</sup>

Bourne had not been involved in the decisions concerning the TLC, and was unsure of its relation to the amphibious lift for two brigades agreed to by the COS on 20 June 1940. He was further confused by a note from Churchill, who, upon being advised of the

5. Morrison to Alexander 22 Jun 40; Churchill to Morrison 7 Jul 40; Morrison to Churchill 9 Jul 40; and Alexander to Morrison 9 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9.

6. Fergusson, pp. 70-71 and Maund, pp. 67-68.



design of the TLC, commented 'Good - Enough sea carriers will be required to transport the vehicles of two armoured divisions at one voyage'. It was clear that Churchill was thinking in far different terms than Bourne and the COS, and Bourne on 16 July 1940 accordingly asked the COS for more specific guidance as to the scale of combined operations contemplated and their maximum range from the United Kingdom, as well as the outline of any ultimate cross-Channel operation.<sup>7</sup> The answers to these questions were necessary for the development of a coherent combined operations policy, but they were not to be forthcoming for a considerable time.

The Director of Plans at the Air Ministry, Air Commodore J.C. Slessor, had complained on 19 June 1940 of this lack of an overall plan for the prosecution of the war. The COS, in a paper of 25 May 1940, had sketched out a strategy in the event of the collapse of France. This was the first appearance of the triad of the economic blockade, strategic bombing, and subversion, but it did not, understandably at the time, mention any offensive operations of the land forces. Slessor now complained that he had been told officially that the War Office was 'not prepared to believe that Germany can be conquered unless and until her land forces are met and defeated on the battlefield', but he was not prepared to accept that a return to the Continent in force was either necessary or practicable.<sup>8</sup> He later noted that this was the start of a JPS study on future strategy which was approved by the COS on 4 September 1940.<sup>9</sup> Due to the press

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7. COS(4) 552 'Overseas Transport for Tanks' 16 Jul 40, CAB 80/15.

8. Slessor to VCAS 19 June 40, Slessor Papers 1E. More on this report is contained in Sir John Slessor, The Central Blue (London 1956), pp. 304-313. The COS paper of 25 May 1940 was taken up by the War Cabinet on 27 May as WP(40) 168, and is well detailed in J.R.M. Butler, Grand Strategy, Volume II (London 1971), pp. 209-217.

9. WP(40) 362/COS(40) 683 'Future Strategy' 4 Sep 40, CAB 66/11 and Butler, pp. 343-353.

of events in September, the paper was never formally submitted to the War Cabinet. It was taken up at a meeting of the Defence Committee (Operations) on 15 October 1940, by which time it was partly out of date.<sup>10</sup> The committee nevertheless described it as 'a valuable study', and for the lack of any other document it must be taken as the strategic policy of the period.

The COS agreed that the need to provide security in overseas areas would necessarily delay the date when major offensive operations could be mounted from the United Kingdom. 'The wearing down of Germany by ever-increasing force of economic pressure should be the foundation of our strategy.' In conjunction with this, air attacks upon Germany were to be increased. Within the limits of resources available it was considered important to conduct amphibious operations against the enemy's coastline to harass him and to weaken his morale. The main thrust, however, as British forces expanded, was seen as making full use of sea power 'to strike with land forces at outlying positions', from which further pressure could be placed upon Germany. The overall policy could not be to raise, and land upon the Continent, an army comparable to that of Germany, but it was assumed that the blockade and air offensive would eventually produce conditions where numerically inferior forces could be employed there with a good chance of success. The general aim was to have an expansion programme such that the British could go over to the offensive in all spheres and in all theatres in the spring of 1942.

In the immediate future, the best opportunities for offensive

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10. DO(40) 34 Mtg 15 Oct 40, CAB 69/1.



combined operations appeared to be in the Middle East. The JPSC on 5 August had recommended that this theatre receive some consideration in the allocation of landing craft, and the C-in-C Middle East<sup>11</sup> was asked to state his requirements. On 24 August London was told that the minimum requirements were for the landing of the assault elements of a division, i.e., two brigades with divisional troops. The suggestion was made that India might be able to build some of the<sup>12</sup> necessary craft.

The Directorate of Combined Operations, now under Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, studied these requirements, the results being<sup>13</sup> presented at a COS meeting chaired by Churchill on 6 September 1940. It was agreed that 48 MLC would be sent around the Cape starting in October 1940. The despatch of the Glen ships did not seem pressing, and it was suggested that proposals for their use, particularly their required dates of arrival, should be sent to the C-in-C Middle East for comment. Precise information on the state of planning in general in the Middle East was not then readily available in London, and<sup>14</sup> information on this was soon requested. In order that the United Kingdom, after the despatch of this force to the Middle East, would still retain the ability to conduct a divisional-size combined operation, even if only from converted liners, a further 26 ALC, 10 SLC and 11 MLC were ordered.

The COS, on 16 September, confirmed that the Middle East require-<sup>15</sup>ments should be provided for, even if at the expense of home needs.

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11. JP(40) 377 'Operations in the Middle East' 5 Aug 40, CAB 84/17.
  12. Enclosed in COS(40) 695 'Landing Craft for the Middle East' 1 Sep 40, CAB 80/17.
  13. COS(40) 520 'Landing Craft' 3 Jul 40, CAB 80/14 and COS(40) 298 Mtg 6 Sep 40, CAB 79/6.
  14. JP(40) 92 Mtg 10 Sep 40, CAB 84/2.
  15. COS(40) 313 Mtg 16 Sep 40, CAB 79/6. See also COS(40) 736 'Landing Craft and Carriers' 11 Sep 40, CAB 80/18.



Keyes then submitted a sailing programme for the despatch of landing craft and assault shipping, this being approved by the COS on 23 September 1940.<sup>16</sup> The three Glen and the two Dutch ships were expected to be ready by the end of 1940, and would arrive in the Middle East, by the Cape route, in mid-February 1941. If the shipping were needed earlier, it would have to pass through the Mediterranean. India was to build 44 TLC for the Middle East, and a further 20 were to be shipped out in sections from the United Kingdom. The COS thought that, with the limited forces then available in the Middle East, combined operations would be unlikely before the early spring of 1941. This general priority for a divisional-sized combined operation in the Middle East was to continue through the beginning of 1941, despite the attention given to other operations such as BRISK and WORKSHOP, and was in accord with the JPS grand strategy paper of 4 September 1940.

The COS by now considered it unnecessarily extravagant to provide separate fleets of landing craft and assault shipping for raiding and for combined operations. On 16 September 1940 they accordingly instructed Keyes to prepare an estimate, in broad terms, of the requirements for possible raiding operations in 1941, at the same time the newly-organised Joint Planning Staff (JPS) were to prepare a similar estimate for large scale combined operations.<sup>17</sup> The total requirements would have to be worked out once the separate estimates were received. This tasking indicated a major change in the responsibilities of the Directorate of Combined Operations, which, up to then, had been

16. COS(40) 767 'Landing Craft and Carriers' 22 Sep 40, CAB 80/19 and COS(40) 321 Mtg 21 Sep 40, CAB 79/6.

17. COS(40) 313 Mtg 16 Sep 40, CAB 79/6

deeply involved in the determination of material requirements. It was now to be relegated to the framing of raiding needs only, being excluded from the planning process of a newly established section of the JPS, the Future Operational Planning Staff (FOPS). The FOPS was henceforth to be the coordinator of material requirements, and, although the Directorate was to continue to have a say, or attempt to have a say, in the allocation of landing craft and assault shipping, even its own material requirements for raiding were to be largely disregarded. The situation would change only towards the end of 1941, when the task of framing requirements for a return to the Continent became too great for the JPS alone.

In addition to its directive of 8 September 1940, the FOPS had been given a tentative list of operations, in order of priority, and was requested to submit outline plans for them as soon as possible, so that special needs might be identified.<sup>18</sup> First on the list was the Middle East, followed by an offensive against metropolitan Italy. It was recognized that operations against Italy might have to be done in phases, with Sicily or Sardinia being seized initially. Third was an offensive to secure a bridgehead in Norway, to increase economic pressure upon Germany. Fourth was the establishment of a bridgehead in France, in the Gironde or Brittany, or on the Cherbourg Peninsula, from which subsequent operations could be launched. Fifth was a move into the Low Countries, so that a force could advance to the Ruhr as quickly as possible. Last was the establishment, in the event of Spanish hostility, of a bridgehead in Spain.

After studying this list, the FOPS suggested to the COS on 14

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18. COS(40) 1 (O) (JP) 'Future Operational Planning' 8 Sep 40 CAB 84/18 and COS (40) 302 Mtg 9 Sep 40, CAB 79/6.



September 1940 that there might be certain basic requirements for each of the operations listed, and that it would be more desirable to consider these requirements first before proceeding with the outline plans.<sup>19</sup> These basic requirements seemed at first sight to include the training and equipping of an assault force of two or three divisions, as well as the provision of the necessary landing craft and assault shipping.

The FOPS report on these requirements was received by the COS on 22 October 1940.<sup>20</sup> In a covering letter, the JPS noted that they had been instructed to prepare future operational plans 'almost entirely for the type of operations in which we make full use of our sea power to enable us to obtain a bridgehead in outlying enemy positions'. The Directors of Plans concurred with the FOPS recommendations and suggested, if the COS were in similar agreement, that the service departments examine them in detail. It was stressed that an early decision was required as to whether these basic requirements, which, in certain cases, might conflict with existing programmes, could or could not be met.

The FOPS, in studying the establishment of a bridgehead, considered that a corps of about two divisions, along with armoured forces, would be required. Although foreseeable naval and shipping resources would be unlikely to permit two such operations being carried out simultaneously, the plans were based on the assumption that two such forces, one in the United Kingdom and one in the Middle East, would be available, so as to be able to mount any operation

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19. JP(40) 443 (S) 'JPS' 14 Sep 40, CAB 84/18

20. COS(40) 18 (O)(JP) 'Future Plans: Basic Requirements' 18 Oct 40, CAB 80/106 and COS(40) 356 Mtg 22 Oct 40, CAB 79/7.



without undue delay.

Naval, shipping, and shipbuilding considerations were the limiting factor in the number of landing craft and assault shipping likely to be available, and thus in the size and composition of the assault forces. Armour would certainly be required, but this presented the most difficult problem of all. If ocean-going TLC were available, the maximum armoured force capable of being landed after a long sea voyage was one brigade. The estimate for the landing craft for one major operation, including reserves and craft for training, was 150 ALC, 30 SLC, 104 MLC, and 90 TLC. For the DCO's raiding requirements, the estimate was 60 ALC, 10 SLC, and 15 MLC - giving a total figure of 210 ALC, 40 SLC, 119 MLC, and 180 TLC. This was 79 ALC, 16 SLC and 150 TLC more than the current programmes, including those for 1941, called for. These figures were based on the assumption that the smaller craft could be transported between theatres for major operations, while the number of TLC was duplicated owing to the difficulties of transporting them. The JPS admitted that this duplication of the TLC might seem rather 'extravagant', but made the prophetic statement that 'every available TLC, if not more, will be required for cross-Channel operations'. On the whole, however, the JPS thought that the most critical factor for a long-range operation might be the provision of shipping.

The service departments were requested to review this study, with the results being circulated by 6 November 1940. It is important to note that the study was drafted without any reference to the DCO, other than the inclusion of his raiding requirements, and that it was not to be reviewed by the DCO. Even greater disregard of the

DCO was to be seen in the final document, which was not ready until 17 January 1941.

The War Office returned its comments to the JPS on 11 November 1940.<sup>21</sup> The provision of the army forces was seen to cause no great problem, and the War Office's only concern was the proposed strength of the armoured force. The minimum aim, it was suggested, should be the landing of two armoured brigades rather than one, at least one brigade of which should be able to land from tank assault ships.

The Admiralty set out its programme for 1941 and 1942 on 19 November 1940.<sup>22</sup> An additional 65 TLC were being ordered, and arrangements were being made to fit three oilers as MLC carriers, termed Landing Ship Gantry (LSG). A number of troopships were also being earmarked to carry landing craft. By July 1941 the number of assault shipping and landing craft in the Mediterranean would be 2 or 3 LSI(L), 2 LSI(M), 3 LSG, at least 7 transports, 95 ALC, 18 SLC, 74 MLC, and 104 TLC. This was a lower number than originally called for, but it was expected to suffice. Remaining in the United Kingdom, for reserves and training, would be 36 ALC, 6 SLC, 45 MLC, and 35 TLC. The DCO would have to make do with 50 'R' Craft, plus another 112 for which purchase approval was being sought. Three 'Maracaibo' oilers were being considered for conversion to tank assault ships, to be ready by May 1941, and the two L.N.E.R. ferries would remain in home waters. The remainder of the assault shipping would have to be brought back from the Middle East if an operation were to be mounted from the United Kingdom. The Admiralty noted that it was extremely

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21 COS(40) 928 'Future Plans - Basic Requirements' 11 Nov 40, CAB 80/22.

22. COS(40) 958 'Future Plans - Basic requirements' 19 Nov 40, CAB 80/23.



difficult to organise the 1941 programme, and even as it was the landing craft could not be completed without detriment to other naval construction. Mention was also made that, if any cross-Channel operations on a large scale were contemplated, the longest possible notice would be required.

The Air Ministry only answered the JPS on 24 December 1940, and raised the main obstacle to the implementation of the plan for the 'invasion corps'.<sup>23</sup> It considered specialised training for the air elements of such a force 'undesirable, unnecessary, and impracticable'. Because of the continuing effort to achieve air superiority, the size and composition of the air element of a combined operation could only be decided a short time before the expedition was launched, and the Air Ministry took the rather cavalier view that 'if at this stage the forces considered necessary are not available, the expedition must be altered in character, postponed, or abandoned'. It deigned to admit that this was 'admittedly highly inconvenient from the planning point of view', but considered it 'no more than the recognition of the realities of the situation'.

The JPS produced their final version of the study on 17 January 1941, noting that three new factors had entered their calculations.<sup>24</sup> The shipping situation had deteriorated. The requirements for an operation involving a open sea passage had changed due to the proposals for tank assault ships and further experience with landing craft. Consideration had also been given, for the first time, to the requirements for a cross-Channel operation. Even excluding the cross-Channel

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23. COS(40) 1057 'Future Plans - Basic Requirements' 24 Dec 40, CAB 80/24.

24. JP(41) 25 (REVISE) 'Future Plans - Basic Requirements' 17 Jan 40, CAB 80/25



operation, the requirements for assault shipping and landing craft were considerable, and raised the question as to what extent interference with other production could be accented. The JPS thought that the requirements they had laid down were reasonable, but there was the possibility of conflict with other programmes.

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The COS examined the JPS paper on 17 January 1941. The formation of an invasion corps in the United Kingdom was agreed to, and it was hoped that it could be ready by 1 August 1941. Another invasion corps would be formed in the Middle East with the resources there. The size of the armoured force for an assault was a compromise. After a sea voyage, the goal was to be one armoured and two infantry brigades in the first flight. In the case of a short voyage, a second armoured brigade could be landed from TLC. Nothing much was to come of these 'invasion corps', as the War Office was to realise that large operations would have to be conducted by the units at hand, rather than by special purpose formations. The COS also accepted the Air Staff's position, so nothing was to be done in this area.

The naval side, concerned as it was with details of procurement, was the most complex, and the one with the most concrete results. The estimate of the landing craft needed for one corps' assault was now 60 ALC, 15 SLC, 44 MLC, 44 TLC, and 32 'R' Craft, a reduction from the previous estimate. The total number of landing craft required had not been reduced equivalently, however, as the previous idea of transporting all but the TLC from one theatre to another now

looked less inviting, and it was considered desirable to have a complete set available in each. Doubling the assault figures, and allowing a 100% loss rate in training and a 30% loss rate in operations over a year's time, the total requirement was now forecast as 210 ALC, 38 SLC, 113 MLC, 103 TLC, and 104 'R' Craft. Not counting the 44 TLC being built in India, which had been found unsuitable for operations, the current programme was 79 ALC, 14 SLC, and 8 TLC short. The COS approved the JPS recommendation that these additional craft should be ordered, and stipulated that work should also continue on the 16 MLC and 58 'R' Craft that were in excess of the new requirements.

The assault shipping was also to be increased. The three 'Mara-caibo' tank assault ships, Misoa, Tasajera, and Bachequero, were to be ready by mid-1941, and orders had been placed in the United Kingdom for three new tank assault ships of the 'Winnette' design. A further six 'Winnettes' were required, but as construction of these in the United Kingdom would seriously interfere with other projects, causing the cancellation of at least twelve corvettes, it was agreed to try to have them built in North America. The three LSG, Derwentdale, Dewdale, and Ennerdale, and the ferries Iris and Daffodil were sufficient to fill the other requirements.

The assault shipping and landing craft above would be sufficient for an overseas assault, but the requirements for a cross-Channel operation would be far larger. The FOPS estimated that the initial assault would have to be conducted by one infantry and one armoured division, with two more armoured and one more infantry divisions following. The size of the force was limited by the number of assault ships and landing craft that the FOPS considered could be built without



seriously interfering with the productive capacity of the country, and by the estimated capability to maintain a force across an open beach until a port could be captured. Besides the material already listed, a further 400 TLC would be required, clearly a serious hindrance to production until after 1942. The Admiralty was then working on an alternative to the TLC, a tank ferry called the 'Brunette', and the COS asked it for a further report on the question of ferries for operations in 1942.

The Directorate of Combined Operations' requirements had been steadily disregarded as time went on. While in the paper of 22 October 1940 a part of the landing craft had been allocated to Keyes, the Admiralty response of 19 November 1940 expected him to make do with the 'R' Craft. In the final paper of January 1941, the requirement for 'R' Craft was determined by the needs of the corps assault, and no mention at all was made of craft for Keyes. It was not clear whether he would receive the 58 excess 'R' Craft, nor was any mention made of assault shipping for him. It could be presumed that he had the LSI(S), and perhaps the two Belgina LSI(M), but, if so, they would be without any landing craft, as the entire production had been allocated to the 'invasion corps'. Keyes was apparently not consulted on the final paper, another commentary on the situation, and no answer can be found to these difficulties.

The Admiralty produced a paper clarifying the naval portion of the basic requirements paper on 21 February 1941.<sup>26</sup> The transports Kenya and Karanja, then being held for operations in the Atlantic, would be converted to LSI as soon as they could be released. This

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26. COS(41) 118 'Future Plans - Basic Requirements' 21 Feb 41, CAB 80/26.



would provide a Middle East force of the three Glen LSI(L), and a United Kingdom force of the two Dutch LSI(M) and the two converted transports. Landing craft for tanks were a major problem. Under the current priorities, with structural engineers alone responsible for their manufacture, only about half the stated requirement could be met by 1942. There were problems with the 'Brunette' design and the Admiralty now proposed to insert another section into a TLC, increasing its capacity. This proved feasible, and a total of 200 'stretched' TLC were then included in the 1941 programme.

The damage to merchant shipping was by this time becoming so acute that the War Cabinet Import Executive, on 28 February 1941, asked the Admiralty to examine again the completion dates for assault shipping and craft, in light of projected operations, to see if any work could be postponed. After study<sup>27</sup> by the JPS, the COS and Denuty Director of Combined Operations (DDCO) took up the matter on 24 March 1941. The conversion of two Belgian LSI(S) was postponed, and the conversion of one of the three 'Maracaibos' was, if possible, to be done in North America. Most of the landing craft were being built outside the shipyards, and so posed no difficulties, but the 200 'stretched' TLC now in the 1941 programme would be a major problem. If they were to be built by structural engineers outside shipyards, they could not be ready until March 1943.

The COS was not willing to accept such a delay, and requested the Admiralty to make another study. The Admiralty responded that the 200 'stretched' TLC could not be completed by April 1942, the original target date, without a major disruption of the regular naval building

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27. JP(41) 221 'Construction of Assault Shipping' 22 Mar 41, CAB 84/28 and COS(41) 107 Mtg 24 Mar 41, CAB 79/10.

programme. The Admiralty therefore suggested a compromise whereby they 'should build as many as we can by April 1942 without seriously interfering with other work'.<sup>28</sup> This extremely vague position was<sup>29</sup> surprisingly accepted by the COS on 18 April 1941. As in the case of production planning from the beginning, the DCO was not a party to these decisions. The Admiralty retained a firm grip on this aspect of combined operations.

The Admiralty proposals for assault shipping and craft of 21 February 1940 had been sent to Keyes for comment, along with a JPS note on the distribution of landing craft.<sup>30</sup> This was just at the time the dispute was in progress leading up to the second directive for the Director of Combined Operations and, involved as he was with this matter, Keyes apparently made no formal response. On 5 April 1941 the JPS proposed a revised policy on the distribution of landing craft, giving increased priority to the Middle East, with the request that they be authorised to carry out further amendments without reference to the COS.<sup>31</sup> What part Keyes would play in the process was not addressed, but, as he only had access to the planning machine through the COS, it was apparent that the new scheme would clearly eliminate what little influence he did have. The COS called Hornby, the DDCO, in to discuss these recommendations on 7 April 1941, and the general policy was approved, subject to a review in a few<sup>32</sup> month's time.

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28. COS(41) 241 'Construction of Assault Shipping - Steel for Tank Ferries' 15 Apr 41, CAB 80/27.

29. COS(41) 139 Mtg 18 Apr 41, CAB 79/10.

30. COS(41) 72 Mtg 26 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.

31. JP(41) 261 'Distribution of Landing Craft' 5 Apr 41, CAB 79/10.

32. COS(41) 126 Mtg 7 Apr 41, CAB 79/10.



The first review of the situation, on 5 July 1941, indicated that the programme was about three month's behind the original forecast.<sup>33</sup> The 'stretched' TLC were expected to be produced at the rate of about 10 per month, but only 125 would be ready by April 1942.<sup>34</sup> The COS 'noted' this on 7 July 1941.

Although the 17 January 1941 version of the JPS basic requirements paper contained a vague outline of the number of landing craft required for a return to the Continent, the basic combined operations policy was still that reflected in the paper of 4 September 1940. In June of 1941 the JPS again conducted a review of strategic policy. This was digested for presentation to the United States military representatives at the RIVIERA Conference between Churchill and Roosevelt in August 1941, and can be taken as the authoritative policy on combined operations at that time.<sup>35</sup> There is now no mention of the long-range, limited-scale combined operation, though the necessity to be able to mount an expedition to seize the Canaries is confirmed. The fundamental strategy, relying on the three elements of blockade, bombing, and subversion, as originally outlined in May 1940 and included in the paper of September 1940, remained unchanged. A return to the Continent was seen as a possibility, but only in the 'final phase' to 'destroy any elements of the German forces which still resist' after a 'radical decline in fighting value and mobility' brought about by the three main components of the overall strategy.

It would be difficult to view the RIVIERA paper as the basis for a change in combined operations policy for the immediate future, but

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33. COS(41) 412 'Construction of the TLC's' 5 Jul 41, CAB 80/29.

34. COS(41) 235 Mtg 7 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.

35. COS(41) 155 (0) 'General Strategy' 31 Jul 41, CAB 80/59. This situation and strategy is well detailed in J.M.A. Gwyer, Grand Strategy, Volume III, Part 1 (London 1964), pp. 1-48 and 125-130.



the planning staffs had begun to appreciate the necessity for large numbers of landing craft. It was also recognised that the main source of production, particularly, TLC, would have to come from the United States. In early September 1941 the JPS consequently gave the Foreign Office a set of unofficial figures, based on a preliminary investigation, for discussions with American supply experts. Counting anticipated wastage up to March 1943, the JPS was now thinking of a total of 1,300<sup>36</sup> TLC. The rationale for this was sent out in a paper by the DMO&P, Major General Sir John Kennedy, on 7 September 1941, in which he explained that the general strategy contained in the RIVIEPA paper, which had been generally accented by the Americans, had envisaged an eventual assault on the Continent, primarily by armoured formations.<sup>37</sup> Although this would admittedly be after the Germans had been seriously weakened, it did entail an assault across the French beaches, the size and date of which would be governed by the TLC production programme.

Kennedy pointed out that the approved programme then in progress had been based on the entirely different concept of long-range combined operations of corps size. This programme, which would result in only 6 tank assault ships and 220 TLC by December 1942, was totally inadequate. A new and vastly increased programme was needed if a landing in France on a wide front was ever to take place. Even the design of the current equipment was incompatible with a cross-Channel assault, for all of it, 'Maracaibos' and 'Winnettes' included, had been built for a beach gradient of 1 in 30. Kennedy recommended that the JPS,

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36. COS(41) 186 (0)(REVISE) 'Overall Production Requirements' 4 Sep 41, CAB 80/59.

37. COS(41) 557 'Landing Craft Production Programme' 7 Sep 41 CAB 80/30.

'as a matter of urgency', examine closely the plans for operations on the Continent in the final phase of the war, with particular attention to the requirements for assault shipping and craft. In any event, immediate steps should be taken to increase the number of the present type of TLC, using American production, and a TLC for use in northern France should be developed as soon as possible.

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The COS reviewed this situation on 8 September 1941. A new programme was certainly needed, but before any decisions could be taken the FOPS would have to complete their study of plans for future operations, and the Admiralty would have to consider the effect of any new proposal on other construction. Actions to develop the American production would be held in abeyance until these two studies had been made. In the interim the Admiralty was to design a TLC suitable for any beach. The Directorate of Combined Operations was not mentioned at all, even though the development of new landing craft was one of its responsibilities that had hitherto never been challenged.

The JPS produced their estimate of the requirements on 11 September 1940, for a brief for the representatives to a conference in London

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on British-American production. The estimates were held to be only provisional, reflecting strategic requirements rather than production capabilities. They were also not tied to British manpower, and much of the equipment would not only have to be produced in the United States but would also have to be manned by Americans. The totals called for 33 assault ships, 1,300 TLC, 500 ALC, 70 SLC, 500 MLC, and 200 'R' Craft, these being considered the bare minimum. These figures were approved on 12 September 1941 as a basis for discussion

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38. COS(41) 315 Mtg 8 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.

39. JP(41) 797 'Overall Production Requirements' 11 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.



with the Americans, as part of the 'Victory Programme'. The Americans accepted the British figures on 20 September 1940, taking them to the United States for compilation with their own requirements<sup>41</sup> and submission to production authorities.

These discussions were the start of the return across the Channel, but they had no effect on the current situation. On 1 October 1941 there were only 52 ALC and 44 MLC in the United Kingdom, and Keyes protested that the study of minor operations was 'futile' unless more landing craft were made available. He therefore requested an immediate decision on a number and type of craft required for operations within<sup>42</sup> the next 12 months.

The VCOS and the DDCO met on 3 October 1941 to discuss Keyes' request, the JPS report on a cross-Channel assault, and a request from the United States for a further definition of landing craft<sup>43</sup> requirements. It was apparent that more ALC and MLC were required than planned for, and the Admiralty was asked to place orders for a further 400 ALC and 400 MLC in North America, the production to start as soon as possible at the rate of 30 a month. The Admiralty was also requested to double the production rate of TLC to 20 a month, again as soon as possible. This increased involvement of the DCO in the determination of overall requirements is somewhat strange, particularly considering the dispute then in progress over the new directive. For the Director of Combined Operations. It would appear that the change resulted from the magnitude of the problem involved.

40. COS (41) 321 Mtg 12 Sep 41, CAB 79/14. This was for a preliminary meeting between the two countries before a delegation was sent to Russia. See Ismay, pp. 227-229 and Taylor, pp. 477-505.

41. COS(41) 215 (0) 'Victory Requirements' 22 Sep 41, CAB 80/59

42. COS(41) 595 'Provision of Landing Craft' 1 Oct 41, CAB 80/30.

43. COS(41) 342 Mtg 3 Oct 41, CAB 79/14.



The JPS had been able to work out requirements for the limited expeditionary force concept, but the question of a return to the Continent in force was so complex that the JPS was not capable of handling it in addition to their other tasks.

The Admiralty was in the process of setting up its own committee to examine landing craft production requirements, and on 8 October 1941 the VCNS told the COS that the decisions of their 3 October meeting had been made without full access to the facts, and that he had therefore suspended action on the conclusions. The COS accented this, and agreed to the Admiralty's establishment of an ad hoc inter-service committee to examine the whole problem of special craft for combined operations, both in the short and the long term.<sup>44</sup>

That some urgent action was necessary was evident from the next quarterly progress report, prepared by the Admiralty on 10 October 1941.<sup>45</sup> The programme, three months behind at the last report, had been further delayed 'owing to the fact that TLC have no priority'. This lack of priority for TLC was something of a surprise to the War Office, but the Admiralty explained that, until the whole matter of landing craft construction had been reconsidered, such would in fact be the case.<sup>46</sup> This was certainly a strange way of expediting production, the intent of all meetings on the subject from the start. The Admiralty also maintained that the TLC could be produced only at the rate of 8 to 10 per month. The gap between what the planners wanted and what was available, always a problem, was seemingly growing wider.

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44. COS(41) 346 Mtg 8 Oct 41, CAB 79/14.

45. COS(41) 620 'Construction of TLC's' 10 Oct 41, CAB 80/31.

46. COS(41) 358 Mtg 17 Oct 41, CAB 79/14.

The COS were informed on 10 November 1941 that the Admiralty was taking measures to implement the decisions of the ad hoc committee,<sup>47</sup> which had first met on 20 October 1941. Production of TLC could, after all, be increased to 20 per month, and production of ALC was to be increased so that 500 would be complete by May 1943. Orders for the 'Winnettes' in the United States had been cancelled, being superseded by an order for four TLC carriers of a new design, termed Landing Ship Dock (LSD).

The VCOS, now with Commodore Lord Louis Mountbatten as Advisor<sup>48</sup> on Combined Operations, reviewed the situation on 14 November 1941. The current programme fell very short of the estimated requirements, but the Admiralty maintained that it would not be possible to produce more than 300 TLC by May 1943 without seriously disrupting the whole building programme. The VCOS was not fully convinced by this argument, and requested the Admiralty prepare another report showing the effect on shipbuilding of a programme of 1,000 TLC by May 1943.

<sup>49</sup>  
The requested report was ready by 5 December 1941. It maintained that a 1,000 TLC programme would require a complete reorganisation of the shipbuilding industry, and even if this was approved it was 'extremely unlikely' that the programme would be completed on time. India and Canada, for one reason or another, were not considered feasible sources for more craft, and this left only the United States, where a similar proposal was already being considered in the form of

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47. COS(41) 668 'Construction of Special Craft for Combined Operations' 10 Nov 41, CAB 80/31.

48. COS(41) 679 'Provision of Landing Craft' 13 Nov 41, CAB 80/31 and COS(41) 388 Mtg 14 Nov 41, CAB 79/15.

49. COS(41) 726 'Special Craft for Combined Operations' 5 Dec 41, CAB 80/32.



the 'Victory Programme'.

The COS considered this report on the afternoon of 8 December 1941.<sup>50</sup> A telegram had been received that day from the Foreign Office mission in the United States, indicating that it might be possible to arrange for the construction of 700 TLC there. A further report was expected from the United States, and the COS decided that they would wait for this before examining the relationship of the availability of landing craft to future planning for combined operations. This news marked the final end of the production programme oriented towards the long-range assault by the 'invasion corns'. The cross-Channel operation, with the aid of American production and American troops, and involving American participation in the planning process, was henceforth to be the major focus of combined operations.

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50. COS(41) 413 Mtg 8 Dec 41, CAB 79/16.

## CHAPTER III

### COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (1)

#### THE APPOINTMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL A.G.B. BOURNE AS

#### DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS AND THE FIRST DIRECTIVE

The evacuation of the BEF from the Continent and the loss of the French as an ally drastically changed the British strategic position. A return to the Continent by the British army to defeat the full power of the German army, and the massive combined operation needed to effect it, were recognized as being totally beyond any future British capability. Cutting their coats according to their cloth, the COS were to develop a strategy which relied upon the strategic bombing campaign, the economic blockade, and the eventual revolt of the occupied territories to defeat Germany. A return to the Continent was foreseen only when the German forces had become so seriously weakened that the British would be able to conduct mainly a 'mopping up' operation. Some of the planners thought that this would take a considerable period - 10 or 12 years - as in the Napoleonic wars.

Combined operations thus did not occupy a key position in British grand strategy. Nevertheless, it was no longer a strictly auxiliary form of warfare. With the exception of operations in the Western Desert, virtually any offensive operation around the periphery of German power would now have to be a combined operation, conducted either to take advantage of an opportunity that might appear, or to forestall an enemy initiative.

The immediate requirement, after the evacuation of Dunkirk, was the defence of the United Kingdom. Churchill was determined,



however, that 'the completely defensive habit of mind, which has ruined the French, must not be allowed to ruin all our initiative'. As early as 3 June 1940, with the allies still fighting in the south of France, he told the COS that it was 'of the highest consequence' to keep the maximum number of German troops occupied along the French coast, and demanded that raiding forces for this purpose be organised immediately. 'An effort must be made to shake off the mental and moral prostration to the will and initiative of the enemy from which we suffer', he continued. Churchill was already showing indications of his desire for a number of large-scale raids. Although this was totally beyond the British capability, he was to remain wedded to this idea for some time, refusing to admit that it was not feasible. This attitude, which can be partly attributed to his recognition of the need to overcome obstacles in a confused and threatening time, was to have a major effect on the development of the combined operations<sup>1</sup> organisation.

Churchill followed his ideas of 3 June in another, and more detailed, memorandum to the COS on 5 June 1940. He wanted proposals framed immediately for 'striking companies', with 'specially trained troops of the hunter class who can develop a reign of terror down these coasts'. He understood that the first raids conducted would have to be the 'butcher and bolt' type, but as soon as the raiding forces were properly organised he envisaged an operation such as the temporary occupation of Calais or Boulogne. Churchill also wanted methods developed for landing tanks onto beaches. A parachute force of 5,000 men was also to be established, and a system of intelligence and espionage created. The COS were to effect measures for 'a vigorous,

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1. Churchill to Ismay, 3 Jun 40, PREM 3/330/5. In his book Their Finest Hour (New York 1962) Churchill gives the date as 4 Jun 40.

enterprising, and ceaseless offensive against the whole German occupied coastline!<sup>2</sup>

On 6 June 1940 the COS instructed the Joint Planning Sub-Committee (JPSC), comprised of the Directors of Plans of the three services, to consider, in conjunction with the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee (JISC), the scope and nature of operations which might be carried out both in the short and long terms, as well as the 'machinery' which should be set up to enable plans and preparations for these operations<sup>3</sup> to be made in the greatest secrecy. The implicit emphasis was on conventional operations, for the War Office had that same day established a section, designated as MO 9, to conduct minor<sup>4</sup> unconventional operations with 'commando' forces.

The JPSC set to work immediately, producing an aide-mémoire that same day outlining their views. The JPSC preferred unconventional operations, being of the opinion that they were best suited to the situation. They noted that steps were already being taken in this regard, though they thought the organisation being established for this purpose needed strengthening. Further details on this were to be given to the COS verbally. The JPSC could not see much potential in conventional raids by 'striking companies' due to the German consolidation of the coast, but admitted that, with information gained by the unconventional operations and the espionage system, opportunities for the use of conventional forces might possibly arise at a later date. In order to grasp such fleeting opportunities,

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2. Churchill to Ismay, 5 Jun 40, PREM 3/330/5. In Their Finest Hour Churchill gives the date as 6 Jun 40. In both this and the above case the difference is not material.

3. COS(40) 170 Mtg 6 Jun 40, CAB 79/4.

4. For more details concerning the establishment of MO 9, see Dudley Clarke, Seven Assignments (London 1948), pp. 205-239.



the raiding forces, suitably organised, equipped, and trained, must already be in existence. The JPSC therefore recommended that a division of regular troops should be earmarked for this role. The division commander, assisted by the ISTDC, would be responsible for determining the organisation, equipment, and doctrine required. This was very similar to the ISTDC proposal of 10 May 1940. The JPSC thought that time could be saved if a regular division of the BEF were given this task, though a delay would nevertheless be unavoidable because of the difficulty of providing special equipment, particularly an adequate number of landing craft. As far as the operational employment of this division was concerned, the JPSC<sup>5</sup> deemed the normal service planning channels sufficient.

Armed with these recommendations, the COS formed some tentative conclusions by 7 June 1940, but Air Chief Marshal Sir Cyril Newall, the CAS, did not get to see Churchill about them until the evening of 9 June 1940. At this time the classification and distribution system for sensitive papers had not reached the sophistication later achieved, and many matters were noted as being too secret to commit to paper. Newall's report is one of these, though the aide-mémoire he used does survive. The COS had accepted the JPSC argument on the division of operations, and Newall explained that the War Office was establishing an organisation for unconventional operations. In respect to conventional operations, the only really suitable formation readily available was the Royal Marine Brigade, then in training for a contingency operation in Eire. The Independent Companies, formed by the War Office during the Norwegian Campaign, were seen as the basis for the 'striking companies' Churchill had wanted. On the

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5. JP(40) 224 or COS(40) 433 (JP) 'Offensive Operations' 6 Jun 40, CAB 84/14.

issue of command and control of offensive operations, either conventional or unconventional, along the occupied coasts, the COS disagreed with the JPSC, feeling that:

If the planning and conduct of offensive operations is to be carried out with efficiency and despatch it will be necessary to set up a central organisation charged with the direction of these operations.

This organisation would be served by a tri-service staff, and in order to give it the widest possible latitude it would be independent of any one service department, coming directly under the COS. A 'live wire' commander was needed for it, and a Brigadier J.F. Evetts was recommended.

In response to Churchill's other demands the CAS stated that the techniques for landing tanks onto a beach from landing craft were well advanced, the only limiting factor being the production of the craft in adequate numbers. Churchill had far higher expectations in this area also, but the scope of his thinking was not then realised. The basis of an intelligence network had been created some time earlier under Colonel Sir Stewart Menzies, though the system would have to be built up considerably in the recently occupied countries. The Air Ministry was to report separately on the formation of parachute forces.<sup>6</sup>

The results of Newall's discussion with Churchill were reviewed by the COS on 11 June 1940. It was agreed that a Commander, Offensive Operations, (COO) was to be appointed by the COS, and provided with a small inter-service staff. He was to receive instructions from the COS, with matters of policy being referred to the Minister of Defence. Subject to this, he was to be given a free hand to prepare, 'as a

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6. Hollis to Seal 7 Jun 40, PREM 3/330/5 and Annex F COS(40) 174 Mtg 9 Jun 40, DEFE 2/699.



matter of urgency', offensive plans which he would subsequently execute. The COO could plan on using the Royal Marine Brigade and, initially, an Army brigade group of specially selected personnel.<sup>7</sup> There are indications of a difference of opinion among the COS as to who the COO was to be, for on 12 June 1940 the Admiralty candidate, Lieutenant General A.G.B. Bourne, the Adjutant General Royal Marines, (AGRM), was appointed rather than the Army candidate, Brigadier J.F. Evetts. Evetts was still to be included in the organisation, and it seems that Bourne was to be concerned with policy and general direction of operations while Evetts was to be the actual raiding commander. There was a measure of logic in the selection of Bourne, since any offensive operation would of necessity be a combined operation, probably involving the Royal Marine Brigade. Bourne was considered to have the background and experience to conduct such affairs effectively, and from the Admiralty point of view it would also maintain the naval predominance in combined operations established since the early days of the ISTDC.

The COS on 13 June 1940 directed the JPSC to draft, in consultation with Bourne, a directive for the COO. A number of specific guidelines were given, among which were that Bourne was to have control over all operations, conventional or unconventional, against the occupied coast, and that he should be kept informed of all other unconventional operations conducted elsewhere. He was to have control of the ISTDC, and would keep in constant touch with the operational and intelligence staffs of the three service departments. He was to determine his requirements for landing craft immediately, planning for the use in the near future of one infantry brigade group. He

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7. COS(40) 176 Mtg 11 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.



was also to receive the parachute troops as part of his forces.

These guidelines indicated one very important change from the discussions of 11 June 1940, for they omitted any reference to the Royal Marine Brigade. This was confirmed as deliberate on 14 June 1940, the rationale being that the brigade's contingency role in Eire was outside of the COO's geographical area of responsibility.<sup>9</sup> This arrangement may have been seen as a merely temporary one, for it is doubtful that the planners could have foreseen the Royal Marines being held in readiness for contingency operations in the Atlantic through 1941. It did create the anomaly of the only regular formation raised for raiding being left out of the raiding organisation, and caused the transformation of the Army 'commandos' into regular units cast in the original role of the Royal Marines. The post-war organisation of the Royal Marines as the British commando force only highlights this fact.

The War Office, who already had the organisation for unconventional operations, remained opposed to the concept of the COS of an overall commander, contending that the COO should be restricted, as the JPSC had recommended, to conventional raiding operations. Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for War, wrote to Churchill on 13 June 1940 in regard to the organisation for unconventional operations. On the basis of papers originating in MI(R), the original section of the War Office concerned with guerrilla warfare and now closely linked with MO 9, Eden proposed the creation of a special department in the War Office which would include applicable operations of the Secret

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8. COS(40) 179 Mtg 13 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.

9. COS(40) 181 Mtg 14 Jun 40, CAB 79/5

Intelligence Service and Campbell-Stuart's organisation. Major General H. L. Ismay, of the Secretariat, wrote a covering letter to this, explaining to Churchill that the COO would have a similar function and suggesting that it would be sufficient to have the Inter-Service Planning Board, the coordinating body for the intelligence sphere, to link the COO with the Secret Intelligence Service and Campbell-Stuart. Eden's proposal was therefore not considered  
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further.

The Director of Military Operations and Plans (DMO&P) in the War Office, Brigadier Otto Lund, was one of the main defenders of the separation of conventional and unconventional operations. Lund had been instrumental in the founding of the 'commando' troops, and controlled MO 9. He wrote to the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff the same day, 13 June 1940, reiterating his position that the COO should be limited to the conduct of conventional raids on the coast of up to divisional size and to the training of other formations of the three services for combined operations. Although the COO might call upon the unconventional forces for assistance in his own operations, Lund maintained that the 'organisation, training, and operation of the irregular forces is much better left in the hands of  
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the MO and MI sections which are now specialising in this subject. This view was supported by Lt. Colonel Dudley Clarke, the head of  
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MO 9.

After discussions with the COO, the JPSC submitted a draft directive to the COS on 15 June 1940. Backed by the War Office, the

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10. Ismay to Churchill 14 Jun 40, PREM 3/330/9.

11. DMO&P to VCIGS 13 Jun 40, WO 193/384.

12. Clarke, p. 216



JPSC had disregarded the guidelines laid down by the COS and had institutionalised the division between conventional and unconventional operations. Further arguments were put forward for this distinction, to the effect that, as unconventional operations would extend far beyond the occupied coast, the organisations responsible, though liaising closely with the COO, should remain independent. The JPSC thought that there would be no duplication or interference, and that co-operation might occasionally be possible. There was a good deal to be said for this new line of argument, and the COS finally gave their approval.

The JPSC had further categorised conventional operations into raids and combined operations intended to seize and hold strategic objectives, such as the contingency operations then planned in Eire or against the Portuguese Atlantic islands. While Bourne would be responsible for raids against the German occupied coast, the second category of combined operations would be the responsibility of the appointed commanders working through normal service channels. Because of the similarities in the material and techniques involved in both types of operation, it was accented that

Although it is essential that, when a commander is appointed for any combined operation, he should be solely responsible for its planning and execution, the assistance of a permanent expert organisation, to act in an advisory capacity, would prove of considerable value.

Bourne's control of the ISTDC would enable him to serve as the authority on landing operations, and he was thus given the dual function of 'Commander of Raiding Operations on Coasts in Enemy Occupation and Adviser to the Chiefs of Staff on Combined Operations', controlling the Directorate of Combined Operations.

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13. JP(40) 244 or COS(40) 467 (JP) 'Directive to General Bourne'  
15 Jun 40, CAB 84/15.

This directive was clearly a victory for the JPSC, who saw most of the points made in their aide memoire of 6 June 1940 retained. The new organisation would not be responsible for unconventional operations nor for combined operations other than raids. The title given to Bourne also would seem to imply that he would only be responsible for raids on the occupied coast of northern Europe, and not in other areas. Bourne's operational responsibility was thus effectively limited to the one type of operation which the JPSC had considered to be the least promising. He was given an advisory role in other operations, but this was an awkward arrangement that would lead to many other problems. This restricted role may have suited the planners, jealous of their authority, but it was far different that what Churchill had intended, and the seeds of trouble were sown. Bourne readily accepted the limitations in the directive, writing on 23 June 1940 that

It is neither desirable nor necessary that the activities of this Directorate should in any way supersede those of the ISPS. The DCO staff should be represented during the preparation stages of any plan which may involve a landing in the face of opposition. They can not only give advice but can prepare the technical operational plan for the landing itself. When the commanders are appointed the most suitable meeting place for them is in the operations room of the DCO Directorate, where all assistance can be given them. Close touch will be maintained throughout with the ISPS who should continue to insure that executive action is taken by the service department concerned.

In general, the activities of this Directorate may usefully be summed up as 'to assist and not to supersede the existing organisations for raiding and for combined operations. 14

The full directive is reproduced at Appendix A.

The DCO's responsibilities were reasonably well defined, but there was some difficulty about the command arrangements. The most complex problem arose in regard to the military forces. MO 9 was to

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14. 'Memorandum by DCO' 23 Jun 40, DEFE 2/698.



be the DCO's contact in the War Office for all military forces, although it had been organised to direct the Commandos in unconventional operations. The Independent Companies from the Norwegian campaign, originally formed as unconventional units under MI(R), and now under MO9, were deemed conventional units under Bourne's control for raiding. The parachute units, although they were to come from the Commandos, were also to be under Bourne's control. The Commandos themselves, although intended for an unconventional role and thus outside of Bourne's scope, were being used initially for small conventional raids. These operations were Bourne's responsibility and so the Commandos were also included in his directive. MO 9 and the Commandos were thus responsible to two different agencies for two types of operations. The delineation between the two was vague, and in the early days MI(R) even sent representatives to Bourne's staff meetings. As one section of the War Office commented on 20 June 1940, 'This is getting, as we knew, into a perfectly glorious muddle'.<sup>15</sup>

Other difficulties were also being encountered in regard to the Army brigade group promised the DCO. War Office feeling had been, as in the JPSC recommendations of 6 June 1940, that a force of up to a division might be required for combined operations. Contingency operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes had since been planned, and the immediate need for trained troops had caused the War Office to earmark two brigades of Major General B. L. Montgomery's 3rd Division for them. It was then thought that the third brigade of this division would be one Bourne would use for raiding. As brigades of this division were sent on operations they would be replaced by other brigades,

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15. GSD to CSS 20 Jun 40, WO 193/378.

so that there would always be a division trained for combined operations in hand. This scheme being adopted, there was no need for Evetts to serve as the raiding commander, as Montgomery could perform this function.<sup>16</sup> By 4 July 1940, however, the entire 3rd Division was reassigned to other tasks, being replaced by the Royal Marine Brigade for operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes. Bourne was thus left without any regular formations for raiding, and also without a raiding commander. The War Office would later attempt to combine the Independent Companies and Commandos into formalised Special Service Battalions in a Special Service Brigade, which it may have viewed as the replacement for the regular brigade group. The Commandos and Independent Companies, in performing this task of raiding, soon lost all connection with the unconventional operations for which they had originally been raised, organised, and equipped. The Special Service Brigade organisation would revert from Special Service battalions to Commandos in early 1941, but its role would remain unchanged. The function of raiding commander, with the departure of Montgomery, was assumed by Bourne, and this arrangement was also to lead to difficulties in the future.

When Bourne began to look at possible raids, the need for a central agency, able to coordinate the political and military aspects of all offensive operations, became even more apparent. On 3 July 1940 he therefore suggested that it was both practicable and desirable to appoint a cabinet minister, with a small staff, to perform this function. The minister would tie together the activities of MI(R), MI 9 and MO 9 at the War Office; MI 6 and Section D at the



Foreign Office; Campbell-Stuart's organisation at the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Information; MI 5 at the Home Office; and the DCO.<sup>17</sup> Similar proposals, unknown to Bourne, had been made by some of the other agencies involved, and on 1 July 1940 the Foreign Secretary had presided over a meeting concerned with the coordination of subversive activities. This was the beginning of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), which was formally established on 19 July 1940.

Bourne discussed his proposal with the COS and the service Directors of Intelligence on 8 July 1940. His scheme was not totally satisfactory, but all concerned agreed that the current system for controlling offensive and unconventional operations needed revision.<sup>18</sup> Further military study of this issue was overtaken by the establishment of the SOE. In an interview in 1942, Bourne mentioned that the DCO was intended to come under the SOE, as he himself had suggested, but that his successor did not like the idea and persuaded Churchill to leave the DCO as an independent agency. As all the records pertinent to the SOE are still closed this can not be confirmed, but it does seem reasonable.

The months of June and July 1940 had been a period of change in the United Kingdom, with new strategies being developed and new organisations being formed. The delineation between some of these organisations was very vague. The JPSC had from the start made a distinction between conventional and unconventional operations, and had intended to keep the control of the unconventional operations

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17. COS(40) 523 'Offensive and Irregular Operations' 3 Jul 40, CAB 80/14.

18. COS(40) 212 Mtg, CAB 79/5 and WO Brief on COS(40) 523 8 Jul 40, WO 193/378. For origins of SOE see M.R.D. Foot, SOE in France (London 1966), pp. 6-9.

in the hands of the War Office. Although Bourne had seemed to agree with this, he was at the end still proposing a merger of these functions. The establishment of the SOE, a product of other political maneuvering, did at least clarify the position of the DCO. The anomalous position of MO 9 and the Commandos was resolved, and they became part of the DCO organisation for conventional operations. MI(R) went over to the unconventional side, and apparently ceased its regular attendance at DCO Meetings. The major loser in this struggle would seem to be the War Office, which lost part of its conventional raiding responsibility to the DCO and all of its unconventional responsibilities to the SOE. This had its effect on the new organisation's relationship with the service ministries. As Clarke would later write

...from the date of General Bourne's appointment a subtle change crept into our relations with the War Office and the Admiralty. We did not detect it straight away, but gradually found fair weather giving place to squalls, and before long the troubles were starting. With the appearance of a Lieutenant-General at the head of an embryo 'Combined Operations Headquarters', the whole character of raiding began to change before it had even started. The Service Ministries saw their grip being loosened, for it was ceasing to be an affair of enthusiastic amateurs to whom they had been ready to give every encouragement and help so long as they remained under their own control. Now control was passing to a brand new agency which was answerable only to the three Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister, an agency which had never been tested and of which conservative Whitehall was frankly sceptical. The War Office viewed the prospect of some five thousand soldiers in the new Commandos being removed bodily from under its hand at a moment when every man might be needed for the defence of England; while the Admiralty felt much the same in regard to the small craft and their crews. It was perhaps only human nature if their staffs began to lose a good deal of the enthusiasm for the new venture as a consequence.<sup>19</sup>

The service departments were naturally loath to give up any more authority than they had to, and jurisdictional disputes were to be part of the scene until the end of 1941.

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19. Clarke, pp. 217-218



Bourne, upon taking up his appointment, had quickly produced more detailed proposals for the new organisation, presenting them to the COS on 20 June 1940. He thought it desirable that the title of his appointment should make it clear that he was responsible for the coordination of all offensive operations 'of the type under consideration' involving more than one service, and after some discussion agreement was reached that he should be termed Director of Combined Operations (DCO).<sup>20</sup> This term implied some fairly broad executive powers, and was perhaps unfortunate. Bourne's successor, in later jurisdictional disputes, leaned on it a good deal, tending to overlook the qualifying clause just quoted...

The Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ) of the Directorate of Combined Operations was very small. Besides Bourne there were three service deputies. The Deputy Director of Combined Operations, Military (DDCO(M)), was Lieutenant Colonel A. H. Hornby, whose contact in the War Office was Clarke as the head of MO 9. The Deputy Director of Combined Operations, Naval (DDCO(N)), was Maund, whose contact in the Admiralty was Captain R. A. Garnons-Williams, RN, as the Assistant Director of the Operations Division, Combined Operations, (ADOD(CO)). The Deputy Director of Combined Operations, Air (DDCO(A)) was Group Captain G. H. Bowman, but according to Bourne he 'did not put in an appearance for some time'. During this period the Air Ministry would refuse to admit that the air role in combined operations called for any particular specialisation, and consequently it did not think that there was enough work for a full-time DDCO(A). Bowman was accordingly also saddled with the development and training of airborne forces and the establishment of a 'special duty flight'

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20. COS(40) 187 Mtg 20 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.

analogous to the naval raiding craft organisation. The latter concept was soon discarded, but his responsibility for airborne forces meant that he spent most of his time in the Air Ministry. A Royal Marine captain served as the adjutant for the COHQ, and Bourne initially asked for a GSO 2 from each service to act as intelligence staff officers.<sup>21</sup> This staff was almost immediately seen to be inadequate, and was increased by three further GSO2s to act as an operations staff and three GSO 3s to act primarily as liaison officers. The intelligence section was soon taken over by Captain John Knox, a Royal Navy officer recalled from retirement. Bourne was initially provided with four rooms in the Admiralty to house the COHQ.<sup>22</sup>

Bourne requested that a total of 2,000 men to be formed into Independent Companies and 5,000 into Commandos, the latter figure including the parachute troops. He tried to regain operational control of the Royal Marine Brigade, but this unit was again excluded. Bourne was, however, given control of the Brigade for training, and it was directed to make use of his advice on any operations it was assigned. While the programme looked promising, Bourne's immediate assets were meagre. The only trained body of men he had available were the 350 men of the first composite Commando. He was told that he could have any small craft in the United Kingdom that he wanted for raiding, but these boiled down to 22 that might

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21. A General Staff Officer (GSO) served in three grades. A GSO 1 was a Lt. Col. or equivalent, a GSO 2 was a Maj. or equivalent, and a GSO 3 was a Capt. or equivalent.

22. References to the initial organisation are found in DP to VCAS 13 Jun 40, Slessor papers VIII D; COS(40) 470 'Memorandum by Lt. Gen. Bourne' 18 Jun 40, CAB 80/13; COS(40) 187 Mtg 20 Jun 40, CAB 79/5; JP(40) 7 (ISPS) 'Instructions to General Bourne' 21 Jun 40, CAB 84/93; and 'Memorandum by DCO' 23 Jun 40, DEFE 2/698. The quote on Bowman is from 'Interview with Lt. Gen. A.G.B. Bourne' 4 Aug 42, DEFE 2/699.



conceivably be useful'. Further investigation showed that only one of these might be likely to make a cross-Channel trip, and this one broke down on the way to Dover. Bourne therefore had to rely on seven RAF crash boats borrowed without the Air Ministry's knowledge.<sup>23</sup> He quickly realised that, whatever the wishes or intentions of Churchill and the COS, the raiding programme would be very limited for some time to come.

Bourne was aware of Churchill's dislike of small operations, but, with the assets available, they seemed the only feasible course for the near future. He had inherited the plans for one such raid, termed COLLAR, which was directed against the French coast at Le Touquet, near Boulogne. This raid was conducted on the night of 24/25 June 1940, but had little success.<sup>24</sup> On 10 July 1940 Bourne then drafted a reasoned memorandum outlining a policy for such operations. He emphasised that all offensive operations should be related to the plan by which the war would ultimately be won. In the absence of any clear instructions, he had set the goals of his Directorate as the destruction of the enemy's resources, the forcing of the enemy to expend his resources, and the making of the enemy's life as hard and as uncertain as possible. The sooner these were achieved the sooner would victory be possible, and he therefore planned to conduct small raids as soon as weather conditions and his limited resources would permit. Bourne was aware that this policy might come under criticism for being merely a series of 'pinpricks', but he was confident that

... these pinpricks very materially assist us in the general

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23. 'Interview with Lt. Gen. A.G.B. Bourne' 4 Aug 42, DEFE 2/699.

24. H. St. George-Saunders, *The Green Beret*, (London 1971) gives a good account of this raid, pp. 18-22, though the date is incorrect. Another account is in Buckley, pp. 167-168. The date is confirmed from the entry in the COHQ War Diary 24 Jun 40, DEFE 2/1.

policy... and will not in any way prevent us carrying out larger and more impressive raids when the means are forthcoming... These more spectacular raids will be coming in due course, but they will only differ from the smaller raids in that they will tend to make the enemy expend still more guns instead of butter, and cause more enemy to be harried and made miserable. They will not produce any new effect and therefore my contention is that the sooner we start the process the sooner the war will end...

I submit therefore that my present policy of staging small raids is in conformity with correct war policy, and that these small raids should be permitted to continue until such time as larger raids could be started, and later in conjunction with such larger raids.

This view was supported by the War Office, which felt that his actions were 'being hammered very seriously by a lack of drive, due to uncertainty as to whether his raiding policy has the whole-<sup>25</sup>hearted support of the Chiefs of Staff'. The War Office felt that<sup>26</sup> Bourne's policy should receive 'unqualified approval'.

Bourne met Churchill for lunch just after he had written the memorandum above, but did not manage to dissuade Churchill from his desire to conduct much larger raids. Churchill had earlier been given an outline of the full raiding organisation that was to be established, and was apparently unwilling to accept that the forces<sup>27</sup> proposed would not be available for some time. Bourne then met the COS on 12 July 1940 to discuss his policy. It was again apparent that the Prime Minister, rather than the COS, was the main opponent of the small raid policy. The second raid for the COHQ had just been approved, and, rather than support Bourne's proposals and provoke a confrontation with Churchill, the COS deferred consideration of his policy until after the results of this raid were

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25. COS(40) 544 'Raiding Operations Policy' 10 Jul 40, CAB 80/14.

26. WO Brief on COS(40) 542 (sic) 11 Jul 40, WO 193/384.

27. 'Interview with Lt. Gen. A.G.B. Bourne' 4 Aug 42, DEFE 2/699.



known. The raid, termed AMBASSADOR, was conducted against Guernsey<sup>29</sup> the night of 14-15 July, and was a complete failure.

Despite the failure of the first two raids, the War Office still supported Bourne's policy. On 22 July 1940 Eden wrote to Churchill explaining his views on the four phases of future offensive operations. He thought the first would be the reconnaissance and experimental phase of very small raids; the second a series of 'constant smash-and-grab' operations conducted along the coast; the third large combined operations against important objectives; and the fourth the conduct of major offensive operations inland. The forces for the second phase were then in the process of formation, and Eden thought it necessary that they be 'blooded' by modest 'mosquito raids'. These would also serve the purposes of reconnaissance, the development of material and technique, and the creation of a good 'moral effect'. One or two raids a week, of not more than 200 men, were forecast. As soon as regular formations could be released from home defence duties and could be trained they would initiate the third phase by tackling objectives too well defended for the raiding forces. As long as the operations were raids the DCO would be responsible, but if they were intended to seize and hold bridgeheads the normal service channels would be used. Eden also made

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28. COS(40) 219 Mtg 12 Jul 40, CAB 79/5.

29. See St. George-Saunders, pp. 23-25 and Buckley, pp. 169-171. These two accounts differ in minor details. Peter Young, Commando (New York 1969) gives a brief description of both early raids on pp. 13-15. John Durnford-Slater, Commando (London 1953) gives a good first-hand account of the raid. He mentions that it was originally scheduled for 12-13 July, and the postponement may have been due to the need to secure Churchill's approval. The more detailed account in many ways, particularly of the reconnaissance measures, is Charles Cruickshank, The German Occupation of the Channel Islands (London 1975), pp. 85-90.

the point that, in the first two phases, the Army was likely to have<sup>30</sup> more troops available than the RAF or Navy could transport.

This approach had a good rationale behind it, but it was a very long-term programme. The British would be restricted to the first two phases for a considerable period. This ran counter to all of Churchill's concepts. He intensely disliked small raids, considering it 'unworthy of such a large entity as the British Empire to send over<sup>31</sup> a few cutthroats'. His reply to Eden set a policy that effectively stopped further raiding against the Continent until the fall of 1941.

It would be most unwise to disturb the coasts of any of these (the occupied) countries by the kind of silly fiascos which were perpetrated at Boulogne and Guernsey. The idea of working all these coasts up against us by pin-prick raids and fulsome communiques is one to be strictly avoided.

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Churchill was then thinking in terms of two to three raids<sup>32</sup> of between 5,000 to 10,000 men being conducted against the French coast during the winter of 1940-41, and it would be only after these that he would consider small raids. The differences between his intentions and British capabilities is evident here, for it was not until 1942 that the British were in a position to mount such a large raid.

This bar on small raiding placed both Bourne and the Directorate in a difficult position. Bourne's directive limited him to raids on the coast of northern Europe, and his capability limited him to small raids at that. Since these were not to be allowed, the operational requirement for the Directorate was questionable. The advisory role remained, but there were problems with this that would surface at a later date. Bourne himself was in an awkward position, for he was an avowed proponent of a policy that had now been expressly repudiated

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30. Eden to Churchill 22 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9.

31. 'Interview with Brigadier O.M. Lund' 8 May 42, DEFE 2/699

32. Churchill to Eden 23 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9.



by the Prime Minister. The War Office continued its support, but this bore little weight as its own credibility was rather low in Churchill's eyes.

One area in which Bourne did lay a solid foundation was that of combined operations training. It soon became clear that the area around the ISTDC was not safe enough to base the shipping, and Loch Fyne in Scotland was selected as a suitable site. A meeting was held in the War Office on 18 July 1940, and agreement secured that a Combined Training Centre (CTC) should be established under Vice Admiral Theodore Hallet, who would be termed the VACTC.<sup>33</sup> Hallet, who was to report to the DCO, took command of the CTC at Loch Fyne on 1 September 1940. It was commissioned on 15 October 1940 as HMS Quebec.

During July 1940, the principle was accepted by all parties involved that formations should be rotated through the CTC, rather<sup>34</sup> than concentrating on one or two specialist brigade groups. Few troops could, under the circumstances, be made available for this training, and the first battalion of 1st Corps only started its cycle on 4 November 1940.<sup>35</sup> Because of the continuous earmarking of forces for contingency operations, however, and the shortage of landing craft, training of other formations for combined operations remained a low priority, and less than two divisions were to be trained by April 1942.<sup>36</sup>

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33. Bourne to DMT 11 Jul 40; DSD to DCO 16 Jul 40; and 'Minutes of Meeting held by DSD on 18 July to discuss 'Arrangements for a Training Centre for Combined Operations' 18 Jul 40, WO 193/378.

34. COS(40) 241 Mtg 30 Jul 40, CAB 79/15 and COS(40)587 'Training in Combined Operations' 30 Jul 40, CAB 80/15.

35. Note to C-in-C Home Forces 14 Oct 40 and 26 Oct 40, WO 193/378

36. COS(41) 406 Mtg 3 Dec 41, CAB 79/16.

## CHAPTER IV

### COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (2)

#### THE APPOINTMENT OF ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET SIR ROGER

#### KEYES AS DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS

Although Churchill had in effect started the process that led to the establishment of the Directorate of Combined Operations, the problems associated with the fall of France and the entrance of Italy into the war had prevented the COS from discussing its formation in detail with him. Knowing what importance Churchill attached to offensive operations, they had gone ahead alone with the appointment of Bourne and the preparation of his directive. Churchill was first appraised of their actions in a note by Ismay on 20 June 1940.<sup>1</sup> Immersed in other, more serious matters, Churchill merely noted this on 22 June 1940, asking for a weekly progress report. It was not until 30 June 1940, when Churchill received Bourne's first progress report, that the realisation dawned upon him that Bourne was the former AGRM.<sup>2</sup> The two met for the first time since Bourne's appointment on 2 July 1940. Churchill did not seem too happy about Bourne's appointment, and was particularly irritated that he had not been consulted. He therefore asked his secretary to determine exactly how this appointment had come about. Bourne was an experienced officer, though he has been characterised as rather 'pedestrian'. He worked well within the Admiralty channels, but might not be capable of breaking loose from them to form the independent organisation that Churchill deemed necessary to produce some vigorous action.<sup>3</sup> Bourne's advocacy of a

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1. Ismay to Churchill 20 Jun 40 and Jacob to Seal 6 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/5.

2. Ismay to Churchill 24 Jun 40 and annotation 30 Jun 40, PREM 3/32/1 and Bourne to Churchill 30 Jun 40, PREM 3/330/5.

3. Interview of Author with Maj. Gen. J. L. Moulton, 10 Nov 1978.



small-scale raiding policy, anathema to Churchill, also told heavily against him. On 7 July Churchill notified the COS that:

I was surprised not to have been consulted beforehand in the appointment of AGRM which arose from various minutes I had sent to the COS Committee. It is always better to mention a matter of this importance, involving the three services, to me beforehand, especially when I myself am taking a great interest in it. However, I gladly approve, as a temporary and emergency measure, the interim steps which the COS Committee took. I have the highest opinion of General Bourne's services as AGRM, and of his powers of emergency improvisation. The scope which I desire may be given to these operations is, however, far more extensive than is at present foreseen, and I have come to the conclusion that their planning must be entrusted to an officer of seniority and proved war achievement.

It is an oft-commented weakness of Churchill that he relied too much on old friends from World War I, and this can be seen in this note. For the post of DCO he suggested either Lord Trenchard, Lord Cork, or Sir Roger Keyes. Churchill added that his own judgement turned<sup>4</sup> on Keyes, and asked for the COS opinions. This was apparently a not unexpected choice. Hornby was later to write that Keyes 'had been hanging about in the background for some time, and we in COHQ always realised there was an odds-on chance of him being appointed<sup>5</sup> as soon as excuse could be found to do so'. It is certain that the COS, and in particular Pound, opposed this appointment. There is very little record of the conversations leading up to Keyes' eventual appointment, though Pound was later to write that 'Keyes intrigued<sup>6</sup> himself, against the advice of the COS, into the position'.

On 17 July 1940 Churchill sent a note giving his decision to the

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4. Jacob to Seal and Churchill to Ismay, 6 Jul 40 PREM 3/330/5.

5. Interview with Brig. Hornby 28 Mar 42, DEFE 2/699.

6. Pound to A.B.C. Cunningham 12 Dec 40, Cunningham Papers Add. 52561.

COS.

I have appointed Sir Roger Keyes as DCO. He should take over the duties and resources now assigned to General Bourne... General Bourne should be informed that owing to the larger scope now to be given to these operations, it is essential to have an officer of higher rank in charge, and that the change in no way reflects upon him or upon those associated with him... I formed a high opinion of this officer's work as AGRM, and in any case the Royal Marines must play a leading part in this organisation.

Pending further arrangements, Sir Roger Keyes will form contact with the service departments through General Ismay as representing the Minister of Defence.

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Sir Roger Keyes, Admiral of the Fleet and MP for Portsmouth North, was then 67 year old. The commander of the famous Zeebrugge raid in 1918, he had left active service in 1931 and was formally retired in 1934. From 1934 until his elevation to the peerage in 1943 he served as an MP. He was a close personal friend of Churchill's, having known him since 1903-4, and had been a strong supporter of Churchill from the Gallipoli campaign through the defence debates of the Thirties.<sup>8</sup> He possessed a tremendous personal ruggedness, a great faith in his own ability to lead men in combat, and not a little desire for personal glory. As a retired officer, he had not been kept abreast of Admiralty planning, but the war had barely started before he began to criticise the Admiralty for its passive conduct of operations and the 'lack of any attempt at immediate offensive action'.

Keyes had approached Churchill as early as 4 September 1939 with some ideas for action, and Churchill had volunteered then that, after he had time to look around, he would find a 'mission' for Keyes.<sup>9</sup>

Keyes' mounting criticism of the Admiralty, sharpened by his frustra-

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7. Churchill to Ismay 17 Jul 40, DEFE 2/698.

8. Details of Keyes can be found in C. Aspinall-Oglander, Roger Keyes (London 1951)

9. Keyes to his wife Eva 5 Sep 39, K 13/21.



tion at being excluded from current planning, steadily increased the difficulty of finding employment for him. The Admiralty, and in particular the CNS, Admiral Pound, became even more reluctant to deal with him, and the gap widened further. On 1 November 1939 Keyes again complained to Churchill that his 'unique experience' was 'not being<sup>10</sup> made use of in any way'.

Keyes' dissatisfaction with the Admiralty reached its height during the Norwegian campaign. He had some proposals for offensive action against Trondheim which had been disregarded, leaving a great deal of bad blood between himself and Pound. Keyes was astonished by the withdrawal from Norway, and took part while in full uniform in the debate in the House on 7 and 8 May 1940 over the government's conduct of the war. He was one of the chief critics of the government, and his speech was regarded by some observers as having had a major<sup>11</sup> influence on the change in the government.

Keyes' estrangement from the Chief of the Naval Staff must have been obvious to Churchill, but, in his own impatience for offensive action, something the service departments had not seemingly produced thus far, Churchill stood by his old friend, believing that he alone would be able to instill the bold offensive spirit that the occasion demanded. It is even possible that Churchill may have considered making Keyes the head of the COS, but if so this idea was quickly<sup>12</sup> dropped at the realisation of the opposition it would encounter.

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10. Keyes to Churchill 1 Nov 39, K 13/12.

11. Aspinall-Oglander, p. 349 and Keyes to Churchill 4 Jul 40, K 13/13.

12. Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, Action This Day - Working With Churchill (London 1968) pp. 62-63 and R. Lewin, Churchill as Warlord (London 1973) p. 8.

Churchill, as headstrong as he was, was not one to go against the unanimous opinion of his professional service advisors. As it stood, Pound's objections to Keyes' appointment as the DCO bode ill for the future.<sup>13</sup>

The COS were informed that Keyes had taken over as DCO on 19 July 1940. A discussion ensued on his title, and it was finally agreed to retain that devised for Bourne. No publicity was to be given to the new appointment.<sup>14</sup> The manner in which this appointment had been handled was to have a very detrimental effect on the development of the combined operations organisation. As evidenced by Churchill's comments in the note of 7 July 1940, in regard to operations 'far more extensive than is at present foreseen', and in the note of 17 July 1940, on the 'larger scope to be given to these operations', his expectations of future large-scale combined operations, mirrored by Keyes himself, seems to have been the decisive factor in the appointment of Keyes, though the exact phraseology may in part have been an attempt to justify the appointment of an Admiral of the Fleet. Bourne was, after all, a Lieutenant General and the AGRM, and even the whole group of forces then promised could well have been handled by an officer of his rank. But, as has been noted, Bourne favoured small raids, whereas Keyes was more 'Zeebrugge minded'.<sup>15</sup> There was also little doubt that Keyes could wrench the rather revolutionary organisation then being formed out of the stifling grip of the service departments, as Churchill thought necessary, although the resulting antagonisms would make the proper integration of the combined operations organisation into the machinery for the conduct of the war a well-nigh unattainable goal.

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13. Aspinall-Oglander, n. 333

14. COS(40) 228 Mtg 19 Jul 40, CAB 79/5

15. 'Interview with Brigadier O.M. Lund' 8 May 42, DEFE 2/699.



There is, most unfortunately, no record of Keyes' discussions with Churchill about the scope of his appointment. Keyes was certainly to consider himself the Prime Minister's deputy for combined operations, a point of view which was supported by his original reporting arrangement through Ismay and by Churchill's direct approaches to Keyes for some early operations.<sup>16</sup>

Besides the personal factor, there were other pitfalls inherent in Keyes' appointment. Although it was soon clear that Churchill was thinking of Keyes conducting operations on a scale of 5,000 to 10,000 men, no full explanation of the 'larger scope' of the DCO was ever developed.<sup>17</sup> Bourne's original directive, with all its limitations, was consequently carried over without revision. Bearing in mind the COS' previous experience with Keyes, they certainly would have had no inclination to increase his authority gratuitously. Keyes surprisingly accepted the old directive without requesting alterations, most probably because he was confident, in the event of any dispute, of the support of Churchill. Both the COS and Keyes subsequently read into the directive whatever was convenient to themselves, and the resultant divergence of outlook was to cause friction throughout Keyes' tenure. All attempts to modify the directive by Keyes were looked upon by the COS as a threat to their rightful position as the sole responsible military advisors to the Government, while all attempts at revision on their part were regarded by Keyes as an attempt to limit the authority personally invested in him by the Prime Minister. The COS' predominant mood of cautiousness, contrasted with Keyes' desire to go over to the

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16. Fergusson, p. 52.

17. Based on Churchill's comments to Keyes in Churchill to Keyes 25 Jul 40, K 140/3/1 and Churchill to Eden 23 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9. No detailed descriptions of the intended scope are available.

offensive, served to exacerbate this conflict. In many cases the advocacy of certain operations was on strictly partisan lines, with Churchill, or in minor cases Ismay, forced to act as arbiter. It was Churchill himself who in August 1940 had to lay down the guideline for the division of responsibility concerning raids, and who had to write the first new directive for Keyes in 1941. Though this intervention temporarily settled these disputes, this could hardly be termed a functioning system, the decisions being made thus frequently being compromises based on the exigencies of the moment rather than on a rational and comprehensive review of requirements.

Keyes inherited Bourne's small staff. Bourne was one of the few people who had a good working relationship with Keyes, and agreed to stay on for a time as the Deputy Director of Combined Operations (DDCO). The DDCO(M), DDCO(N), and DDCO(A) were then termed Assistant Directors, and became the ADCO(M), ADCO(N), and ADCO(A) respectively. They were to be the points of contact with their own service departments, and act as the authority on their own service matters, such as training. The intelligence section was initially seen as the key component in the targeting process for raids, as well as a collection agency for both raiding and combined operations commanders until the operations were launched. Its actual use in combined operations was to vary with the views of the force commanders concerned. Keyes attempted to formalise its functions during the mounting of MENACE, the operation against Dakar in 1940, but was not successful. This intelligence service was equally offered to the service planning staffs, though it was not used extensively.

Keyes decided that as long as the COHQ was housed in the Admiralty



it would be looked upon as a mere appendage to that department. A search for a suitable office was conducted, and towards the end of August 1940 the Directorate moved into the War Cabinet Annexe at Richmond Terrace. This move was opposed by Maund, who thought that the main task of the DCO should be the expansion of the landing craft programme, which would require a close connection with the Admiralty.<sup>19</sup> This was not the last time that Maund would take an Admiralty viewpoint, and he would soon clash with Keyes. On the whole the move of the COHQ did seem to establish the identity of the organisation, and did assist it in becoming the first truly integrated tri-service organisation in the United Kingdom.<sup>20</sup> MO 9 and the ADOD(CO) remained in the War Office and Admiralty, respectively, and they did help to keep the COHQ in touch with events. The change in raiding policy, however, confirmed by Keyes' appointment, meant that these sections did not always receive the fullest cooperation from their own department. Dudley Clarke would later comment:

With this change unfortunately there went too a further measure of the sympathy and support of the three service ministries, upon which we on the lower levels so much depended. Being realists all, they looked for quick and visible dividends, and were not immediately impressed with the promises of long-term appreciation as represented by the altered policy. To Garnons-Williams, Alan Hornby, and myself, negotiations with them grew in difficulty from then onwards.<sup>21</sup>

There was little contact with the Air Ministry. Keyes was not content to have the services of Bowman as ADCO(A) on a part-time basis only, and negotiations were conducted with the Air Ministry in early August. Requests were also being made for RAF officers for the

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19. Maund, p. 100.

20. Fergusson, p. 54

21. Clarke, p. 248.

CTC and the ISTDC, but the Air Staff did not believe that combined operations was a full-time job for three officers, considering its own desperate need for qualified pilots. Hornby and Slessor finally agreed that the ADCO(A) post would be a full time one, but Bowman was not 'anxious' to take it up, and was replaced by Wing Commander G.M. Knocker, who had originally served at the ISTDC. No officers were provided for the other two positions, but a squadron leader under the Deputy Director of Plans (MC) of the Air Staff was to serve<sup>22</sup> as Knocker's contact in the Air Ministry Staff.

Bourne did not remain long with the COHQ. The First Lord of the Admiralty wrote to Keyes on 14 October 1940 that Bourne had only temporarily been replaced as AGRM by an officer called out of retirement, so that the position would remain open should he return. Something definite now had to be decided, as the continuation of this arrangement would cause problems in the officer personnel structure<sup>23</sup> of the Royal Marines. Keyes agreed that, while Bourne's help and experience had been valuable in the transition period, it was no longer<sup>24</sup> necessary to have an officer of Bourne's seniority as his deputy. Keyes therefore asked the VCIGS if Hornby could be promoted to brigadier and appointed DDCO, with an additional GSO 1 added as ADCO(M). The CIGS and Military Secretary balked at this, as Hornby was relatively junior in rank and they thought there were other officers with better claims. Keyes insisted that Hornby should be selected, as he was already well experienced in the operations of the COHQ. The promotion seemed equitable to him as Hornby was both older and had longer service than the brigadier recently appointed to command the raiding troops.

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22. DP to VCAS 11 Aug 40, Slessor Papers VIII D.

23. Alexander to Keyes 14 Oct 40, K 13/25. There is no indication of how long Bourne was originally expected to hold the post of DCO.

24. Keyes to Alexander 19 Oct 40 K 13/25.



The VCIGS deferred to Keyes 'personal wishes' on 31 October 1940,  
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 and Hornby became the DDCO.

The COHQ, despite the provisions of its directive, was only incidentally involved in the planning for MENACE, the operation against Dakar. This had grated on Keyes, and on 16 August 1940 he submitted a memorandum to the COS on the system of planning for combined operations. 'My experience to date of the system outlined (in Paragraph 10 of his directive) leads me to propose the following... modifications in procedure in order that fuller use may be made of the combined operations knowledge of this Directorate'. Keyes considered that after the joint planning stage the detailed planning should be done by the COHQ rather than the ISPS, with the ISPS being consulted in regard to details such as shipping. This had been the procedure for some earlier projects such as a raid on Kirkenes harbour. When the commanders of the operation had been appointed, the COHQ should be responsible for arranging the provision of all necessary intelligence for them, for assisting them with advice as required, and for liaison between them and the ISPS. The COHQ would also be responsible for assisting the commanders in any arrangements necessary for combined operations training, and for ensuring that the arrangements made by the ISPS were adequate for the execution of the commanders' detailed plans. Keyes also saw it within his province to represent his views to the COS on the general outline of the commanders' plans, if for any reason he thought it necessary. 26

These proposals were not favourably received by the War Office, the coordinating agency of the JPSC. The rejoinder was that the

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25. Keyes to Haining 24 Oct 40, Haining to Keyes 28 Oct 40, Keyes to Haining 28 Oct 40, and Haining to Keyes 31 Oct 40, DEFE 2/698.

26. COS(40) 635 'Planning for Combined Operations' 16 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.

first part of Keyes' proposal was unnecessary, for as soon as commanders of operations were appointed they were the ones responsible for the detailed planning, assisted by both the ISPS and the DCO's staff, who theoretically had the advantage of having previously studied the problem. This was not, however, always the case as far as DCO's staff was concerned, as it was this very issue in the MENACE planning process that had prompted Keyes' paper. As far as the provision of intelligence was concerned, the War Office held the somewhat extraordinary view that there had been, for MENACE, no duplication in the provision of intelligence from various sources, and that the establishment of a central coordinating agency would result in the production of less intelligence, rather than more. The general feeling was that the ISPS was already performing most of the functions Keyes had listed, and so a reorganisation was not really necessary. The DCO was already considered to have some access to the COS on the commanders' plans in his capacity as the Adviser on Combined Operations, and it appeared to the War Office that the function outlined by Keyes exceeded this, and might not prove acceptable. It was also held to be rather redundant, as Keyes already was, theoretically at least, 'consulted by the ISPS throughout the examination of any combined operations project and is at all stages in a position to state his views on the form which the plan is taking'. This was, as evidenced in the planning for MENACE, an argument based on Keyes' position on paper, with complete disregard for the facts. It was due partly to a firm opinion by the War Office that Keyes' position as an advisor on combined operations was primarily intended for those operations for which he had a geographical interest, i.e., those on the Continent, and not for others such as MENACE. The War Office brief on Keyes' proposals concluded by suggesting that:



more time might with advantage have been allowed for the examination of the DCO's proposals before consideration by the COS than has now been possible, since there would appear to be no urgent reason for a change in the existing system for the control of combined operations. The ISPS themselves, having first hand knowledge of the planning machinery, should perhaps have been asked their views so that the COS could have a balanced view of the problem.<sup>27</sup>

The COS considered Keyes' paper on 17 August 1940, and after some discussion it was agreed to defer further consideration of it 'until the views of the commanders detailed for certain operations<sup>28</sup> and of the ISPS had been ascertained'. This was in effect an administrative pigeonholing of the question, as the formal comments of the MENACE commanders and - the target of Keyes' criticism - the ISPS were never requested. The after action report for MENACE written by Major General N.M.S. Irwin, however, did support some of Keyes' complaints, and proposed a role for the COHQ similar to the one given in Keyes' paper. The matter was nevertheless quietly forgotten by the COS, but not by Keyes.

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27. WO Brief on COS(40) 635 17 Aug 40, WO 193/384

28. COS(40) 269 Mtg 17 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.

## CHAPTER V

### THE JOINT PLANNING SYSTEM

This period also saw considerable changes in the service machinery for the conduct of the war. On 22 April 1940 the Admiralty and the Air Ministry had established the post of Vice Chief of Staff, and the DCNS and DCAS became the VCNS and VCAS respectively. The War Office had followed suit on 27 May 1940, when the DCIGS became<sup>1</sup> the VCI<sup>1</sup>GS. On 24 June 1940 the COS agreed that in order to cut down on paperwork and to allow time for them to concentrate on major issues of strategy, the VCOS would be authorised to deal with minor matters. The VCOS continued having separate meetings, under the old DCOS series, until 8 August 1940. After that the VCOS meetings<sup>2</sup> were held as part of the COS series.

On 8 June 1940 the Directors of Plans decided that the JPSC and ISPS should be formally linked. The JPSC would control the work of the ISPS, a body of junior officers whose primary function was to examine projects in detail and prepare co-ordinated operational<sup>3</sup> and administrative plans on an inter-service basis. There was a common secretariat for both of these staffs. In his early days as Prime Minister, Churchill was not content with the established service machinery, and this accounts for many of his original attempts to bypass it. The planning system received its share of his censure, and he soon decided to modify 'this important though up to now not very effective body', so that it would be more responsive to his

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1. HMSO, The Second World War- A Guide to Documents in the Public Records Office (London 1972) gives the outlines of all the service ministry organisations.
  2. COS(40) 191 Mtg 24 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.
  3. JP(40) 54 Mtg 8 Jun 40, CAB 84/2 and JP(40)1 (ISPS) 'Inter-Service Planning' 8 Jun 40, CAB 84/93.



personal requirements. On 24 August 1940 he therefore told the COS that the JPSC would henceforth work directly under the orders of the Minister of Defence. It would form part of his office and would work in the War Cabinet accomodations. The Directors of Plans were, however, to retain their present positions and contacts with the three service departments, though they would work out plans for projects as directed by Churchill himself. They would remain at the disposal of the COS for the elaboration of plans sent to them by the COS, and were also empowered, under certain conditions, to initiate plans of their own. All plans, regardless of origin, were to be submitted to the COS for comment, and if any differences of opinion arose, the matter would be resolved by the Defence Committee (Operations). Churchill himself assumed the responsibility for informing the War Cabinet of projects in progress, although the COS' relationship to the War Cabinet would supposedly remain unaltered.<sup>4</sup>

This new system received the formal approval of the War Cabinet on 26 August 1940.<sup>5</sup> Churchill was later to write that the new organisation was 'readily accorded' him by all his advisers. This is stretching the point, as the concurrence of the COS could at best be called grudging. Slessor objected, terming Churchill's decision a 'ukase', but Portal feared that if the COS resisted the transfer of the JPSC Churchill would simply set up an independent planning staff of his own. The COS were having trouble enough over Churchill's direct dealing with outside individuals and agencies. Major General R.H. Dewing, the new DMO&P, also insisted on a protest. The CIGS, with the backing of Eden, apparently did so, but as he was not

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4. Annex to JP(40) 421 'Joint Planning Arrangements' 6 Sep 40, CAB 84/18.

5. WM(40) 234 Mtg 26 Aug 40, CAB 65/8.

supported by the CNS or CAS it had no effect. In the end a workable, though unorthodox, system was developed. Although Dewing was still to complain that the COS were 'seriously undermined', as time went on it became apparent that they had retained a large measure of control. The ready availability of the planning system also served to curb Churchill's tendency to resort to outside sources. This had a great impact on the COHQ, as Keyes' influence was consequently much reduced.<sup>6</sup>

It took a few weeks to iron out the administration of the system. An expansion of the planning staffs was required, and Churchill demanded carefully selected officers who, all things being equal, should have been wounded or at least seen active service in the current war.<sup>7</sup> All planning papers would be sent directly to Churchill, with a simultaneous submission to the COS under a covering note by the Directors of Plans. If the Directors of Plans wished to initiate any papers of their own, they could submit them directly to Churchill as long as approval had been secured from at least one of the COS.<sup>8</sup> The detailed establishment of the new system was codified on 6 September 1940. The Directors of Plans controlled the Joint Planning Staff (JPS), which was divided into three sections. The former staff of the JPSC became the Strategic Planning Section (SPS), located in the Cabinet War Room, which would examine and report on strategic matters relevant to the three services and on current or probable future strategic problems. It was also responsible for the Cabinet Map Room. The former ISPS

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6. Diary of Maj. Gen. R.H. Dewing 26 Aug 40 to 1 Sep 40, held by Dewing's son and A.J. Marder, Operation Menace (London 1976), p. 26. For details on how Churchill used the system, see Lord Ismay, The Memoirs of Lord Ismay (London 1960), pp. 158-176. The War Office view can be seen in Sir John N. Kennedy, The Business of War (London 1957).

7. COS(40) 694 'Joint Planning Organisation' 1 Sep 40, CAB 80/17.

8. JP(40) 88 Mtg 30 Aug 40, CAB 84/2.



became the Executive Planning Section (EPS), located in the planning sections of the service departments, which would plan all the executive action necessary to put into effect both operations ordered at short notice and operations that had been planned by the third component, the Future Operations Planning Staff (FOPS). The EPS would also assist the commanders appointed for any operation with the preparation of their operations orders. The FOPS was an entirely new section, located in Richmond Terrace, which would work out future operational plans in as much detail as possible, and subsequently keep these plans up to date.

All three sections were instructed to consult as necessary with the DCO in his capacity as an adviser on the technical aspect of combined operations. Reference was also made at this time to Churchill's decision to divide the responsibility for raiding operations between the DCO and the JPS, with Keyes being responsible only for raids of 5,000 or under. It is not definitely known what prompted this further limitation of the DCO, but it does follow the consistent line of the service departments.<sup>9</sup> This limitation was apparently accepted without protest by Keyes, much as he had accepted the limitation in the directive inherited from Bourne. The lack of resources for raids of a larger size may have mitigated against any dispute at this time.

The formation of the FOPS had been delayed by the difficulty in finding suitable officers. The first member of the section reported for duty 9 September 1940, and the section was not complete until the end of that month. A draft directive for the section was prepared on 8 September 1940 by the JPS and sent to Churchill, with a copy

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9. JP(40) 421 'Joint Planning Arrangements' 6 Sep 40, CAB 84/18.

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 going to the COS. The Section was intended to prepare operational plans for offensive action. This would be done in two stages, the first of which was the investigation and preparation of an outline plan. This would ensure that the detailed plan was based on sound assumptions and that any preliminary decisions reached were brought to the attention of the COS at an early date. In addition, if it became clear that special material or preparations which required some time to develop and implement were needed for these plans, the arrangements for their provision could be initiated without delay. The outline plan therefore had to include a statement of assumptions on which the plan was based, the immediate and ultimate objectives of the operation, its general nature, and the approximate strength of the forces and shipping required. In particular the plan was to indicate the most suitable time of year for the operation, the particular conditions governing its practicability, any equipment which must be specially provided, any particular type of training which must be conducted by the forces involved, and any other preparations which required early action. The second stage comprised the completion of the outline plan, after it had been approved by the Directors of Plans, in as much detail as was possible. The FOPS was also given a tentative list of operations, in order of priority, and was directed to submit outline plans for them as soon as possible.

( The FOPS studied these documents and came back to the COS on 14 September 1940. A number of points concerning their planning responsibility were raised. They noted that they were apparently 'only concerned with the preparations in detail for combined operations', although they were to put forward outline recommendations for other

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10. COS(40) 1 (0)(JP) 'Future Operational Planning' 8 Sep 40, CAB 84/18 and COS(40) 302 Mtg 9 Sep 40, CAB 79/6.



operations in furtherance of the general strategy. They assumed that they would not be responsible for the production of the actual plans for these complementary operations, except for co-ordination. They considered also that the outline plans for offensive operations should include action not only by the service department but also by such agencies as 'D' and Campbell-Stuart's. The plans of these organisations should also be in accord with the broad strategic plans, and the FOPS therefore recommended that they should advise, regarding the operations that they were planning, those organisations as to the areas and times when subversive action and propaganda should be undertaken, and that they themselves should be kept 'in a very general picture' about plans for such action. Similarly, they thought that minor actions in support of the economic offensive, such as those proposed to the DCO by the Ministry of Economic Warfare, should not conflict with their planning. They therefore sought authority to include such minor operations in their plans, and also the right to be kept informed in general terms of other minor operations envisaged. Finally, in regard to the whole subject of these minor operations, they noted that whereas the COS future strategy paper had spoken of the initial operations as probably minor ones in support of the economic offensive, no mention of these were made in their directive. They requested clarification, as they assumed that they were not responsible for minor operations other than those in furtherance of the major  
<sup>11</sup>  
offensive plans.

The Directors of Plans considered these points on 16 September 1940. They reaffirmed their decision that all the outline plans should be prepared before any work started on the detailed plans,

and noted that this would take at least two months, but they also agreed that before preparing any of the outline plans the FOPS should draw up as soon as possible their recommendations as to any basic material requirements, including landing craft and assault shipping. This tasking marked the demise of the COHQ as a collaborator in the determination of material requirements, and it was not until late 1941 that it was again to share this function. The DCO would from time to time be asked about the allocation of shipping, but he was now an outsider in yet another part of the combined operations system. Although this responsibility of the FOPS was logical, much of the assistance that could have been rendered by the COHQ was lost because of the organisational split between the COHQ and the JPS.

The JPS also agreed that close liaison should be established between the FOPS and the departments responsible for propaganda, and that the FOPS should include in their plans proposals for raids by the DCO in furtherance of major operations. The responsibility for proposing operations in furtherance of the economic offensive was given to the Strategic Planning Section, though, it would be<sup>12</sup> for the FOPS to formulate the actual plans.

This internal discussion within the JPS reveals clearly just how limited was their view of the proper role of the DCO. All major combined operations were to be the responsibility of the FOPS. As far as minor raids were concerned, those forming part of the plan in support of major operations were the responsibility of the FOPS, and those in support of the economic offensive were to be co-ordinated between the SPS and FOPS. There was no mention of the DCO, even

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12. JP(40) 95 Mtg 16 Sep 40, CAB 84/2 and COS(40) 45 (0) 'Future Operational Planning: Supplementary Instructions to FOPS' 18 Sep 40, CAB 84/18.



for technical advice. It seemed that Keyes was to have no part in general planning at all. The overall emphasis suggests that the COHQ was viewed solely as an operational agency, involved in the detailed planning and execution of raids on the Continent, but concerned neither with the formulation of raiding policy nor with the integration of the raids into the general strategic plan. The question of whether this was the correct concept, or the most efficient use of the COHQ, was never gone into in any depth. The concept reflected Keyes' interest in current operations, rather than in the long-range planning, and this system consequently came into being without any strong objections by the COHQ. The continuing conflicts over current operations between the COHQ and the EPS served to mute any criticism that might have been made of the FOPS, and so the system was never accorded thorough analysis.

While this planning organisation functioned reasonably smoothly in the internal triangle of the Prime Minister, COS and JPS, it did have a number of inherent friction points with the DCO. The COHQ could never be considered to be fully integrated into the system until a member of the DCO's staff was included in the composition of the JPS. Without this link the expected close co-operation of the two bodies was entirely dependent on the existence of a harmonious working relationship that, with Keyes as DCO, was highly improbable. While it was expected that the JPS would coordinate with the DCO, there was no provision for supervision to ensure that this was in fact done, or for arbitration if differences arose between them. As the COHQ was not on the JPS working paper distribution list, the DCO often did not see the JPS proposals until they reached their final form.

The result was frequently a collision at the COS level. Even here the DCO was present only at the invitation of the COS, and if an argument was in prospect the easiest course was simply to exclude<sup>14</sup> him.

The system was also designed to use the DCO only in an advisory capacity, which was not, Keyes believed, the intention of his appointment. In his opinion the DCO was the 'Director' responsible for all aspects of combined operations. The early practices had reinforced this view, and on the whole Keyes' feeling that his authority was being encroached upon is understandable, if not always justifiable. The definition of the raiding responsibility was another sore point. Drawn up by Churchill without a detailed appreciation, it bore the imprint of a compromise solution made without an adequate survey of the missions and roles involved. Even Churchill admitted that this definition solely by numbers was an inexact one, and that there would be borderline cases which would have to be considered on an individual<sup>15</sup> basis.

As noted above the creation of an internal planning system for Churchill's projects, linked closely to the COS by virtue of the Directors of Plans' dual position, effectively cut Keyes off from the easy access to Churchill and direct involvement in planning that he had initially enjoyed. Keyes' lack of a position within the system, leaving him as a mere external adviser, greatly reduced his influence on the decision making process. This in many respects

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14. That this was in fact done was admitted by General C.R. Price, who served on the secretariat, in an interview with the Author on 30 Nov 78.

15. As in Ismay Draft to Churchill 5 Nov 40 PREM 3/330/7.



was welcome to the service departments, who were never happy with the creation of an outside organisation to undertake what were considered to be their rightful functions. Keyes' aggressiveness and personal desire for action as the commander of an expedition often led to his advocacy of operations considered unsound by the more cautious COS, and this lessened his influence even more. The fact that none of the proposed operations ever came to fruition only increased Keyes' frustration, and left his relations with the service departments under a more or less permanent cloud. Far from Churchill's later opinion that Keyes' 'close personal contact with me and with the Defence Office served to overcome any departmental difficulties arising from this unusual appointment', the failure to properly integrate the Directorate of Combined Operations into the planning and decision-taking process was to dog the conduct of combined operations throughout Keyes' tenure.

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CHAPTER VICOMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (3)THE DRAFT DIRECTIVE

The appointment of Keyes may have shifted the emphasis of the COHQ to larger raids, but little could be done to provide an immediate increase in material capability. Churchill initially went directly to Keyes for proposals for raids of 5,000 to 10,000 men, two or three of which might be conducted along the French coast during the winter, after the danger of invasion had passed. Even larger armoured thrusts were contemplated for the spring and summer of 1941. On 25 July 1940 Churchill, again bypassing the COS, asked Keyes for a detailed list of the men, material, and establishments under his command, along with proposals for three or four medium sized raids in September or October of 1940. There was no practical result of this, but it did<sup>1</sup> serve to reinforce Keyes' opinion of his status.

On 27 July 1940 Keyes answered this request, giving a much more realistic picture of what was then possible. As of yet no assault shipping was available, and, besides the 15 ALC earmarked for an operation against Dakar, only 1 SLC and 4 MLC were available. Only 500 men from the Commandos and 750 men from the Independent Companies were ready for operations, and the parachute troops had not yet been formed. The JPS had been independently examining the raiding possibilities, concurrent with this exchange, and, when it was clear that large raids of the type that Churchill had in mind were some way into the future, they once again recommended a policy of small raids. This was supported by a number of factors. Keyes' forces were not seen as

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1. Based on Churchill to Eden 23 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9 and Churchill to Keyes 25 Jul 40, K 140/3/1.



being able to mount large-scale operations independently, there were not sufficient landing craft, and there was a lack of regular forces to exploit any successful landing. Another important consideration was the morale problem likely to be encountered in Keyes' units if they were not soon used in the role for which they volunteered.<sup>2</sup>

By 8 August Keyes himself proposed to carry out small raids of 200 to 300 men whenever suitable objectives could be found. He noted that the larger raids envisaged by Churchill would be undertaken as soon as the brigade group mentioned in Bourne's directive had been assigned and properly trained.<sup>3</sup> This proposal, as could be expected, received the support of the War Office, but the COS on 9 August simply 'took note' of it. Their failure to give this policy a positive endorsement avoided a certain clash with Churchill, but the resulting lack of definition did not make the planning for any subsequent raids any easier.

There was still some resistance in the service departments to Keyes' role in the planning and conduct of large-scale raids. This, combined with the realisation that the means were not available, caused Churchill to reduce implicitly his expectations in an effort to define raiding responsibilities. By September 1940, as has been noted, Keyes had been assigned responsibility only for raids of 5,000 men or less, leaving the larger raids in the hands of the normal planning organisations. This was not really a functional breakdown, but the main problem was that, with Churchill's ban on small raids and with the failure

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2. JP(40) 76 Mtg 29 Jul 40, CAB 84/2 and COS(40) 588 (JP) 'Raiding Operations' 31 Jul 40, CAB 80/15.

3. COS(40) 612 'Combined Operations' 8 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.

of the War Office to provide the regular brigade group for larger raids, the COHQ was effectively condemned to a long period of inactivity. This was intolerable to Keyes, and contrary to the whole rationale for his Directorate.

This bar on small raids did not prevent the COHQ, the JPS, or the Ministry of Economic Warfare from proposing a number of such operations during the fall and winter of 1940, but, despite a great deal of time and effort being expended on the operations, none were approved. Keyes was thus forced to look for action further afield, his justification for this being that his directive gave him command of operations conducted by his own units. It was by no means clear that the restrictions as to size, type, and location of operation were applicable in these cases. Keyes maintained that they were not, and this view was given implicit support by Churchill in some tentative decisions on MENACE-the assault against Dakar and TOMATO- an operation against the Channel Islands, as well as by the original plans for BRISK- an operation against the Azores. This view was given explicit support in the command and control arrangements for WORKSHOP, the assault against Pantelleria in the Mediterranean planned for the end of 1940. It was during the preparations for WORKSHOP that Keyes developed the concept of an amphibious striking force under his control. The COS, particularly Pound, and the JPS naturally enough did not share Keyes' views, and the definition of operational responsibility in such cases was to be one of the main areas of dispute throughout Keyes' tenure.

The COHQ encountered a forced lull in its operations owing to the invasion alert of 7 September 1940. Upon this, Keyes agreed to hand over the operational control of all his units to the C-in-C Home



Forces. These units were then integrated into the regular home defence scheme. Four Commandos were released to Keyes by 15 October for BRISK, an operation against the Azores, while the remainder of Keyes' forces, now reorganised into a Special Service Brigade of three Special Service Battalions under Brigadier J.C. Haydon, were returned to him on 10 November 1940.

The changes in concept of the functions of the DCO, the additional instructions issued since the original directive, and experience gained in operations, all pointed to the need for a revision of the directive Keyes had inherited from Bourne. The revision was initiated by the VCIGS, Haining, who submitted the draft of a new directive to the CIGS on 12 October 1940. The principle differences, in the draft, were the removal of the airborne forces from the DCO's jurisdiction and an increase of the DCO's responsibilities for the organisation and training of the Special Service troops. Haining commented that,

The operational needs of the DCO are so specialised that I feel he should assume a greater responsibility than in the past. It is not easy for the War Office, without his direction, to organise and train troops to carry out operations which vary in many essential aspects from those which the army normally expects to undertake.

The draft outlined Keyes' responsibilities for raiding the enemy coast, particularly from Norway to France inclusive. He was given complete discretion in the choice of objectives - subject to the COS direction, and in the scale of operations - up to 5,000 men. The Special Service Brigade was placed under his operational control for this purpose, and in the future he would be responsible for its training. The DCO was also recognised as the determining agency

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4. Eden to Churchill 11 Sep 40, PREM 3/103/1 and Eden to Keyes 12 Sep 40, DEFE 2/698.

in questions of organisation of the Special Service troops. The other aspect of Keyes' position, that of Adviser to the Chiefs of Staff on Combined Operations, was more clearly defined. Keyes' position in regard to combined operations training was described, as well as his advisory responsibility for combined operations beyond the limited scope of raiding. The EPS were, in this respect, to consult him whenever they received a combined operations project for study.<sup>5</sup>

Haining sent the draft to Keyes for comment, and Keyes thought 'at first glance it will suit the case very well indeed'. After further consideration, Keyes returned the draft to Haining on 21 October 1940 with some minor amendments. He deleted the proviso that operations orders issued by the COHQ to the commander of the Special Service Brigade should be approved first by the War Office, as well as a reference to the Special Service units involved in combined operations, other than a raid, having their plans worked out by the force commanders through the EPS. Both of these amendments would strengthen his control of the Special Service troops. Keyes also made one addition concerning his continuing responsibility for the airborne forces.<sup>6</sup>

This amended draft was then circulated in the War Office. The DMT commented that it meant 'that we hand over the Special Brigade and I have no further responsibility for training. In the light of what has happened... I think this is possibly the right answer'. He thought that the school of irregular warfare, dealing as it did with topics other than combined operations, should remain under the War

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5. VCIQS to CIGS 12 Oct 40, WO 216/54.

6. Keyes to Haining 14 Oct 40 and Keyes to Haining 21 Oct 40, DEFE 2/698.



Office, and noted that the DCO was prepared to agree to this,<sup>7</sup>

Before the amended draft was considered by the COS, however, Keyes had sent them a letter on the control of BRISK, composed as it was of troops under his command. At the COS meeting of 24 October 1940, Pound insisted that Keyes' original directive limited his responsibility to raids. The operations against the Portuguese Atlantic Islands were combined operations, and thus, regardless of the composition of the troops, there was no question of Keyes being<sup>8</sup> responsible for them. This principle was upheld by the meeting.

Keyes was stung by this decision, and on 31 October 1940 sent Churchill a letter bitterly attacking the COS attitude.

...I have not troubled you with my difficulties and I have been very patient, but golden opportunities are being missed and I am convinced will continue to be missed unless you give me the power to plan and organise combined operations and be responsible to you - direct - for their execution.

... I have established very good relations both in the War Office and Air Ministry ... but I am thwarted at every turn by the CNS who seems to dominate the COS Committee as far as combined operations are concerned.

You told me early last May that the COS Committee had all the power and might well lose the war - it will certainly postpone the winning of the war as long as it is constituted as it is...

...I have come to the conclusion that I can be of little use to you in the prosecution of the war so long as I am in any way under the COS Committee.

Keyes proposed a reorganisation that would place the DCO directly under the Minister of Defence, and outside of the COS.

... but better still would be to make me your deputy, with the COS under my direction, as far as combined operations are concerned.

It would be quite impossible to exaggerate the fierce

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7. DMT to VCIGS 24 Oct 40, WO 216/54.

8. COS(40)358 Mtg 24 Oct 40, CAB 79/7.

resentment which is felt by young officers ... over the repeated miscarriages which have been condoned, the lack of offensive direction, and the fact that we are always too late.

Keyes attached to the letter a number of documents dealing with the problems that he had encountered, including a reference to the proposals of 16 August 1940 for the planning system for combined operations, which, despite his repeated requests, had never been answered by the COS; a request that the Royal Marines be placed under the command of COHQ; and comments regarding the exclusion of the DCO from MENACE and BRISK.

Keyes' letter was first received by Ismay. In passing it to Churchill, Ismay apologised for his having to be troubled by it, and suggested that it was not necessary to read all the enclosures. According to Ismay the issue could best be dealt with on 'broad lines'. He had already had several long talks with both Keyes and Bourne about the 'grievances' cited, 'but it has been impossible to make headway, owing to the fact that there is a fundamental divergence of opinion between Sir Roger Keyes on one side, and the Chiefs of Staff on the other, as to the scope and character of Sir Roger Keyes' responsibilities'. Ismay noted that Keyes' proposal that he be made Churchill's deputy in regard to combined operations would be 'tantamount to suggesting that he should be deputy Minister of Defence', since every projected operation would be, by nature, a combined operation. The COS had a very different view of the scope and character of Keyes' responsibilities, which he listed as the planning and execution of raids of under 5,000 men, the limit set by Churchill himself; the command and training of the commandos;



the technical training of troops earmarked for landing operations; the provision of advice to the COS and JPS on the technical aspects of combined operations; and the development of special equipment for combined operations. All these had been enumerated before, though there had been a gradual shift to the role of the DCO as a strictly technical, rather than general, adviser. Ismay clearly perceived the major problem, the vague definition of responsibility, but could offer no comprehensive solution.

The division of responsibility as between the JPS on one side, and the Directorate of Combined Operations on the other, is not susceptible to exact definition. There must always be borderline cases. Elasticity and a spirit of give and take are essential. Given these, the present system should work satisfactorily; without these, no system will work.

Ismay suggested that he draft a minute for Churchill along these lines, if Churchill agreed to the outline of Keyes' responsibilities. 10

Churchill had Ismay prepare the draft, which told Keyes that his proposals of 31 October 'appear to be based on a misconception of the character and scope of your responsibility as DCO', and which 'would not be at all workable'. The description of Keyes' responsibilities then given was virtually identical to that in Ismay's original note to Churchill, and included a verbatim repetition of the paragraph <sup>11</sup> quoted above.

As these had been the COS views, this was a clear rebuff for Keyes. The key, however, as Ismay had pointed out, was 'elasticity and a spirit of give and take'. It must have been evident that these had not existed in the past and, considering the personalities involved, it seems exceedingly over-optimistic if Ismay and Churchill really believed they could be achieved in the future. Churchill

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10. Ismay to Churchill 2 Nov 40, PREM 3/330/7.

11. Ismay to Churchill 5 Nov 40, PREM 3/330/7.

then complicated the situation further. He had recognised the main source of Keyes' discontent, telling Ismay 'but what he wants is something to attempt'.<sup>12</sup> He therefore asked to see Keyes' proposals for an operation against the island of Pantelleria in the Mediterranean. He would soon agree to this project, termed WORKSHOP, and give Keyes personal command of the expedition. Although this satisfied Keyes, it was completely contrary to the definition of responsibilities that Churchill had just laid down.

The draft directive for Keyes was discussed by the COS on 6 November 1940, soon after the above exchange of letters had taken place. The committee, under the circumstances, agreed to 'defer' consideration of the draft.<sup>13</sup> It is not clear whether this was done because they felt that Churchill's recent definition of responsibility was adequate, or because they did not want to reopen a touchy subject immediately. In any event the draft was soon forgotten, and Keyes would continue to work under Bourne's outdated directive until further argument caused Churchill to draw up a new one.

Keyes had simultaneously tried again to obtain a more precise definition by the COS of the COHQ role in the planning of a combined operation. The procedures used in previous operations, either planned or executed, had varied greatly. Keyes therefore suggested that since the 1st Corps had been given the task of training for combined operations, the COHQ and the JPS should use the corps in a dress rehearsal of the detailed planning for an operation. The rehearsal would start with the COS' acceptance of an outline plan,

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12. Annotation by Churchill 3 Nov 40 on Ismay to Keyes 2 Nov 40, PREM 3/330/7.

13. COS(40) 376 Mtg 6 Nov 40, CAB 79/7.



and end with the military commander's production, in conjunction with the naval and air commanders, of the detailed plans and orders. This exercise would have the additional advantage of producing the nucleus of a combined staff which could conduct any projected operation launched from the United Kingdom in 1941.<sup>14</sup> The JPS studied this proposal in a leisurely manner, and then referred it to the C-in-C Home Forces for comment. As he reportedly 'welcomed' the idea of trying out the planning system, the JPS suggested that the COS confer with him to determine what assistance he would like in producing an appreciation and outline plan.<sup>15</sup> The War Office supported the exercise, but thought that it might be a 'good thing' to actually carry out the plan, or at least part of it. This would require that the objective be somewhere in the United Kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

The exercise was discussed with the C-in-C Home Forces and the DDCO at a COS meeting on 2 December 1940. The C-in-C Home Forces was by now less enthusiastic about the idea, commenting 'that if the commander and his staff were to be employed in working out plans for combined operations they could not devote much time to the defence of the country'. The troops diverted from home defence duties for the exercise would ultimately have to be replaced by other formations. Portal then suggested that it might be preferable to base the exercise on an operation that might actually take place, thus reducing the workload on the JPS. Dill still favoured the War Office proposal of having the 1st Corps carry it out as a field exercise, but the committee eventually decided in principle that the rehearsal

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14. JP(40) 602 (S), (E), AND (O) 'Dress Rehearsal of Planning a Combined Operation' 31 Oct 40, CAB 84/21.

15. COS(40) 969 (JP) 'Dress Rehearsal of Planning a Combined Operation' 22 Nov 40, CAB 80/23.

16. War Office Brief on COS(40) 969 (JP) 28 Nov 40, WO 193/378.

should consist of the detailed planning of an actual operation that might have to be mounted at a future date. The JPS were to select a possible operation for approval by the COS, and to frame proposals for the conduct of the rehearsal. The COS would consider the scheme further when this preliminary work had been accomplished.<sup>17</sup>

The JPS recommended the rehearsal of the planning for an expedition mounted from the United Kingdom to capture Sardinia. This would involve all types of forces, including armour, airborne forces, and commandos; almost all forms of assault craft and shipping; and both fighter and bomber squadrons. An outline plan was already being prepared. The JPS noted that this operation was, rather inexplicably, selected because it was 'unlikely that this operation will actually take place in the near future as it would depend on the use of special ships and troops which are not yet available'. The JPS thought that the rehearsal should go through the stages of the FOPS preparation of the outline plan, the JPS review of the strategic situation and the determination that the plan should be implemented, and the EPS review of the outline plan in the light of the latest intelligence, together with its determination as to the adequacy of the forces and their likely availability. The JPS would then submit the plan to the COS both for approval and for the appointment of commanders. The SPS would next prepare a directive for the commanders, and the EPS would assist them in the development of the detailed plans. The COHQ, which had suggested the rehearsal, was not directly involved in the planning, and was only referred to in a note that it would be available at all stages for technical advice on the landing opera-

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17. COS(40) 411 Mtg 2 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.



tions.

The utility of the rehearsal was further diminished when the COS on 13 December 1940 ruled that, since it was unlikely that the proposed operation would ever take place, it would be a waste of valuable time to go through the complete planning process. The rehearsal was therefore to start at the point where the JPS prepared the commander's directive for approval.<sup>19</sup> The outline plan was submitted by the FOPS to the Directors of Plans on 23 December 1940, and the SPS then started on the directive. The directive was approved by the COS on 8 January 1941, but by then a number of actual plans were in progress for operations in the western Mediterranean, and the C-in-C Home Forces was complaining about the diversion of additional forces from home defence that the rehearsal would entail.<sup>20</sup>

The JPS and DDCO accordingly reviewed the situation with the COS on 15 January 1941. The objections of the C-in-C Home Forces proved to be the deciding factor, and Dill suggested that the rehearsal should be postponed until March 1941, at the earliest.<sup>21</sup> On 1 March 1941, when the subject was again raised in the COS, it was agreed that no further consideration should be given to it.<sup>22</sup> The reasons for this decision are unclear, but the end result was the failure of Keyes' second attempt to work out a system for mounting combined operations. The responsibilities of the parties concerned remained vague in many areas, and this would cause further problems during the mounting of operations against the Canaries.

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18. COS(40) 1034 (JP) 'Dress Rehearsal of Planning a Combined Operation' 11 Dec 40, CAB 80/24.

19. COS(40) 426 Mtg 13 Dec 40, CAB 79/8

20. COS(41) 13 Mtg 8 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.

21. COS(41) 18 Mtg 15 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.

22. COS(41) 78 Mtg 1 Mar 41, CAB 79/9.

The DCO's organisational responsibilities were steadily growing, and in November 1940 Keyes explained to the VCNS that the naval side of combined operations would soon include 4,900 officers and men, 440 landing craft, 162 raiding craft, all the assault shipping, and 7 training and operations bases. He therefore needed an increase in the personnel assigned to his staff, and requested an office, with staff, for the ISTDC in the Admiralty. To coordinate the naval activities, he proposed that the position of the DDOD(CO) should be upgraded to that of Director of Landing Equipment and Personnel (Combined Operations). This would enable the ADCO(N) to give his whole attention to the operational side of combined operations.

The VCNS, Rear Admiral T.S.V. Phillips, appreciated that this amounted to the return to the Admiralty of the control of landing craft, with their being administered by an internal 'cell'. He thought that it would be better to have the personnel and material matters handled by the respective Admiralty departments, while the remaining coordination could be done by an officer acting as the Assistant Director of Training and Staff Duties.<sup>23</sup> After consulting with the Admiralty departments concerned, Phillips forwarded his proposal to Keyes on 4 December 1940, indicating that Keyes' staff could be augmented. Keyes agreed to these arrangements on 6 December<sup>24</sup> 1940. The Admiralty upon reflection then decided that, as the responsibilities of the post, with the expanding landing craft programme, would soon increase considerably, it should be upgraded to that of Deputy Director of Training and Staff Duties (Combined Operations) DDTSD(CO)). Some resistance was encountered from the Treasury, but the position was eventually established on 8 March 1941. It

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23. Keyes to Phillips 7 Nov 40 and Phillips to 2nd Sea Lord 12 Nov 40, ADM 1/11113.

24. Phillips to Keyes 4 Dec 40 and Keyes to Phillips 6 Dec 40, ADM 1/11113.



was to encompass all the former duties of the ADOD(CO), as well as all staff duties in connection with the design and development of landing craft. Liaison was to be maintained with the COHQ, but the arrangement clearly showed the DCO's preference for operational, rather than research and development, aspects of combined operations. <sup>25</sup>

The DDTSD(CO) was to be Captain R.V. Symonds-Taylor, RN. There had been some personnel changes on the naval side of the COHQ because of conflicts between Keyes and Maund. Keyes felt that Maund resented his appointment, as Maund had considered himself the naval authority on combined operations. <sup>26</sup> Because of these differences, Maund requested that he be relieved as the ADCO(N) and that he should return to the Admiralty as ADOD(CO). Keyes approved this, though he later complained that, as soon as Maund returned to the Admiralty, he 'at once set to work to undermine my position'. That there indeed had been a strain in relations was attested to by Hornby, who noted that Maund never felt 'at home' in the COHQ, and that 'his heart was in the Admiralty'. <sup>27</sup>

Maund has made it quite clear in his book that he believed that the work of building up the large amphibious organisation that would eventually be needed for the return to the Continent was basically an Admiralty concern, and that the COHQ's concentration on current operations was an unnecessary distraction. His arguments are greatly weakened by the fact that the strategy of 1940 could envisage no such major combined operations. He certainly took the Admiralty side during Keyes' various confrontations. Matters came to a head in December 1940, when Keyes was in Scotland training the force for

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25. CE 56984/40 8 Mar 41, ADM 1/11113.

26. Keyes to A.V. Alexander 5 Dec 41, DEFE 2/698.

27. Hornby to Keyes 22 Dec 40, K 13/25.

WORKSHOP. Maund circulated a paper in the Admiralty reviewing critically the DCO organisation, which he thought 'cannot be described as sound'. He suggested that the organisation be broken up, and the responsibilities returned to the service departments. In this respect he saw the Admiralty playing the major part, as it would be responsible for personnel and base administration, material development and procurement, and training. He thought that these could be directed by a Captain, RN, responsible to the VCNS through the Director of Plans and known as the Deputy Director of Plans for Landing Operations. This officer would coordinate sections in the personnel and material departments of the Admiralty, and the ISTDC. Maund also thought that the raiding system was ineffective. The geographical area in which the DCO was responsible for raiding was not clearly defined, but Maund thought it unlikely that the C-in-Cs of any foreign stations would be prepared to devolve responsibility for raiding to the DCO in London. As far as raiding overseas was concerned, he thought that all that should occur in London would be that the Plans Division would recommend what craft should be sent abroad, and the new post would coordinate the despatch of personnel, craft, and assault shipping as determined by the COS. In home waters, the Admiralty and War Office could administer the personnel, craft, and bases directly. The separate C-in-Cs would be advised of the equipment and personnel available and would propose their own raids. Specialist advice could then be provided by officers attached to the EPS from each service ministry, acting as additional staff officers for the C-in-Cs for operations. The commander of the Special Service troops and the naval craft or ship commanders would also be available to the C-in-Cs. If the organisation were developed along these lines, Maund suggested, 'the difficulties that have arisen in the past months with the departments would be avoided and a clear and natural system of control



would serve the higher command in the conduct of landing attacks on the coasts of the enemy'.

Some of the criticisms and suggestions in Maund's paper seem valid. His point about the C-in-Cs' responsibilities in respect to overseas raiding was apt, but the lack of an overall raiding policy was the fundamental problem, and no structure, even a more decentralised one, could compensate for this. The failure to include specialist personnel in the planning staffs proper was another prime source of trouble, and Maund's suggestions would have helped. It was not until Keyes had been replaced that the service departments would accede to this. The total decentralisation of responsibilities to the service departments, however, illustrates a confidence in inter-service cooperation that was belied by almost all previous experience, and the value of an integrated organisation such as the COHQ was entirely overlooked. The problem was not in the centralisation of functions in the COHQ, which was logically sound, but rather in the failure to integrate the COHQ with the service departments. Maund's attitude, shared by many in the service departments, was in fact one of the reasons why the system was not working.

Considering Maund's position within the combined operations organisation, and the fact that this paper was circulated without Keyes' knowledge, the resultant row is easily understandable. Matters were made worse by the clear implication that Maund himself should be appointed as the Admiralty authority on combined operations. Upon Keyes' return from Scotland he told him exactly what I thought about his disloyalty and intrigues', and complained to the VCNS. Maund thereupon asked to be sent to sea, and Keyes angrily noted

that Maund was 'actually rewarded' by being given command of the Ark Royal. This affair certainly did not help Keyes' relations with the Admiralty, and reinforced his suspicions about the prejudices and intrigues he was facing.

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CHAPTER VIICOMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (4)THE SECOND DIRECTIVE

Keyes' dissatisfaction with his position as DCO had been evident in his long complaint to Churchill on 31 October 1940. This had produced a further definition of his responsibilities as DCO, but fresh arguments had broken out over WORKSHOP and the striking force created for it. On 9 November 1940, when discussing the Special Service troops with Eden, he stated that the War Office had 'played up splendidly'. 'There is only one thing lacking. The will, in one quarter, to let me use them offensively and fearlessly at the earliest possible moment'.<sup>1</sup> Delays in WORKSHOP until 19 November 1940, when Churchill gave him command of the expedition, had irritated Keyes, and thereafter, despite the support given by the Prime Minister, the opposition of the naval members of the JPS, in his view, 'hardened'.<sup>2</sup>

Keyes had seized the opportunity to command WORKSHOP primarily because of his frustration with his appointment as DCO in the United Kingdom. Early in December Keyes explained to the C-in-C Mediterranean that he had held the post for four months but that, owing to the lack of landing craft, assault shipping, and aircraft, and to objections of 'certain brass bound soldiers' in the War Office who hated the very thought of irregular troops, it had been exceedingly difficult to make any progress. He termed his title of DCO as 'misnomer', and implied that there was no geographic limitation on his command of operations undertaken by the Special Service units.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Keyes to Eden 9 Nov 40, DEFE 2/698.

2. 'History of Workshop' 19 Nov 40, PREM 3/507.

3. Keyes to Cunningham 3 Dec 40, K 13/21.

Criticism of Keyes' plan for WORKSHOP continued throughout November and December 1940. After a postponement caused by the Spanish seizure of Tangier, Keyes had offered to step down from the post of DCO, telling Churchill 'if my withdrawal would relieve you, pray tell me so and I will find some other way of helping you win the war more speedily than your COS and those dreadful staff committees will allow you to do'.<sup>4</sup> Keyes' humour improved when he returned to Scotland to train with the WORKSHOP force, but even then the dispute over the temporary transfer of one of his Glens to the forces for TRUCK, an operation against the Azores, was to irk him. 'A DCO with proper powers would have had the planning and preparations for both these expeditions in his hands and, instead of a series of miscarriages, the best use would have been made of the amphibious force available to ensure the success of both operations'.<sup>5</sup>

Further disillusionment set in with the decision, at the end of December 1940, to postpone WORKSHOP a second time, particularly as the main arguments for this had come, once again, from the Naval Staff. Keyes, dismayed at the prospect of inactivity for his force, immediately returned to London to find some means of getting it underway. His temper was not improved when he found out that the LANDFALL convoy, with which the force was originally to sail, was leaving in early January 1941. Throughout this dispute, Keyes surprisingly did not confront Churchill's reluctance to let the force leave the United Kingdom, but vented instead his wrath on his old enemy, the Naval Staff. He would accept neither their justification

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4. Keyes to Churchill 17 Dec 40, PREM 3/330/7.

5. Note by Keyes 21 Jan 41, DEFE 2/698.



of the postponement nor what he considered their attempt to 'put  
<sup>6</sup>  
 the onus' on Churchill.

Arguments over the feasibility of WORKSHOP, now affected by the arrival of the Luftwaffe in Sicily, continued throughout early January 1941. Keyes noted, on 17 January 1941, that the 'pusillanimous procrastination' of the Naval Staff, who had 'done everything in their power to discredit the enterprise', had resulted in the very situation that he had always feared and warned against, fore-  
<sup>7</sup>  
 stallment by the Germans. His bitterness, based on the feeling that, if WORKSHOP had been supported when first approved, the result would have been far different, was evident, and, to a great extent, justified.

The next major dispute arose over the breakup of the striking force assembled for WORKSHOP. The three Glens and three Commandos were to go to the Middle East, in furtherance of the policy outlined by the COS in September 1940. While Keyes could not claim final responsibility for the determination of strategy, the operations of the striking force were, in his mind, clearly within his province. Having failed to secure an appointment with Churchill, Keyes wrote to him on 22 January 1941,

As Minister of Defence you appointed me DCO and made a point of my having direct access to you.

On some important occasions when I wished to see you about the prosecution of some combined operation - generally to warn you that the Naval Staff were jeopardising success and risking forestallment by causing unavoidable delays - I have been told that you were too busy to see me ...

As I am not allowed by the COS to have anything to do with combined operations, I devoted my energies to training an amphibian force. Since, by your ruling, there are no objectives in home waters, eleven weeks ago I suggested to

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6. Keyes to Churchill 3 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

7. Ismay to Keyes 5 Jan 41, and Keyes to Churchill 17 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

the COS sending some commandos to the Mediterranean to raid enemy territories and to capture islands...

I know that you meant me well and intended that my unique experience in combined operations should be made use of, and I hoped that as DCO I might be able to give valuable service. However, the COS Committee decided otherwise and left me nothing to do other than organising the training of the amphibian forces over which the directive I inherited gives me command.

I am very grateful to you in your effort to employ me. I really have been very patient and have done my best to work with the Naval Staff. They and their committees made it quite impossible and my position is intolerable. There is no such office as Director of Combined Operations, and your ruling as to raids gives me nothing to do in home waters even if I could raise the force to do it. I know I could help you win this war but you must give me authority if I am to be able to do so. I am your very devoted friend and supporter but I can not bear to see you and the country being let down by craven hearted advisors...

Please give me an interview today or tomorrow in order that I may know where I stand and how I can best help you, and the country.<sup>8</sup>

Ismay spoke to Churchill about this matter, and the result was a short informal note from Churchill on 24 January 1941. He told Keyes 'I do not think that you ought to write me letters of this kind on matters which affect those under whom you are serving', and went on to say that Keyes would have to obey orders.<sup>9</sup> Keyes was by now somewhat mollified, and wrote a muted letter to the Prime Minister telling him that he appreciated that Churchill was doing his best for the Directorate. Keyes declared that he would always put his duty to the country before any other consideration, and this was why he had been compelled to speak out. The implications of Churchill's remark about serving under the COS was not lost upon Keyes, but his attitude remained unchanged.

When you offered me the appointment of DCO you made it clear that I was under the Minister of Defence and had

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8. Keyes to Churchill 22 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

9. Churchill to Keyes 24 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.



direct access to you. I do not feel that I owe any allegiance to the Naval Staff which denies me the right to criticise their actions when I consider they are contrary to the interests of the country.<sup>10</sup>

The heat of the argument having been dissipated, Churchill finally consented to see Keyes on 27 January 1941. The meeting ended the debate on WORKSHOP, but Keyes still disagreed about the status of the Naval Staff and plans to break up the striking force. Embarkation arrangements for the Glens added to Keyes' frustration. He complained of these to the COS on 30 January 1941, apologising for troubling them with such apparently trifling details, but acidly noting that, under the definitely limited authority he possessed, he had no other means of expressing his views. In this respect he reminded the COS that he had never received any reply to his proposals of 16 August 1940 for a further definition of the responsibilities for the conduct of combined operations. He felt that much could have been done to facilitate the preparations for past operations if the system he had then recommended had been put into effect. Despite some reminders, he had since heard nothing of it.<sup>11</sup> The COS apparently ignored this, for there is no entry on the subject in their records.

The inability to obtain a decision on his authority, and the actual sailing of the Glens, brought Keyes' frustration to a head. On 4 February 1941 he wrote another letter to Churchill, in the same vein as his letter of 22 January 1941. As it well summarizes Keyes' position and attitude, it is reproduced here at length.

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10. Keyes to Churchill 25 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

11. Keyes to COS 30 Jan 41, DEFE 2/698

I have not bothered you with my difficulties more than I could help, since you appointed me DCO and gave me an outline of what you wished me to do, and the men and vessels I would have under my control. I was very grateful to you, for it seemed to me a wonderful opportunity for being of real service, and I had visions of waging the kind of amphibious warfare which has always appealed to me, and of which I have had far more experience than any living soldier or sailor.

You put a ban on pin prick raids generally and on small operations which could not really affect the enemy's war effort. I was fully in agreement with this policy, and I hoped before long to mount amphibious strokes, akin to those launched by the elder Pitt 200 years ago, but I have been sadly disillusioned.

I won't weary you with a long tale of my efforts to come to some working arrangement with the Naval Staff - the record is on the shelf ready for the historian... I cannot possibly be of use to you in the prosecution of our war effort under the existing regime.

You have directed me to make my commandos up to 5,000, and I have given my views as to the possibility of recreating a spearhead, as good as that which has just been dissipated, by dividing it into two parts - neither of which is large enough to play a decisive role in an operation of the magnitude you told me to concentrate on...

But it is really not fair to me (or the country) to limit my energies, readiness to accept responsibility, initiative, and power of leadership, to raising and training the personnel for a problematical combined operation, for which the Naval Staff have neglected to provide adequate transport and landing craft, and which will never be launched as long as the present CNS and staff officers who represent his views on the various joint service committees remain in office.

When it was apparent to me that the COS Committee had no intention of making use of me for the planning and preparation of combined operations, I turned to the one active responsibility within my directive, which would enable my experience to be made use of, i.e. executive command of raiding operations carried out by my commandos up to 5,000.

After infinite amount of opposition, both in the War Office and in the Admiralty, and thanks only to the knowledge that you were backing me, I have been able to organise and train a splendid striking force...

No one can say that I have not made every possible effort to use it offensively...

It is tormenting to reflect on the golden opportunities we have lost by failing to make use of the only seaborne striking force we possess, or can recreate for some time to come.



The haste with which the three Glens were despatched, and the way in which the three commandos were embarked, so that they were no longer the highly trained amphibious unit I had prepared for immediate action anywhere - drives one to the conclusion that the one object of the Naval Staff was to get this striking force well away before it could do anything for which they might be held responsible...

It is hard to believe that it was only sheer incompetence to understand the first principles of war...

If the DCO is to be of any use to the Minister of Defence, he must be his representative on the COS Committee for all matters concerned with combined operations... It seems almost impossible to get soldiers or sailors or their respective ministries to accept responsibility - each tries to place the burden on the others shoulders.

A COS Committee, aided by little people on the various joint committees, can be resolved upon to do nothing...

Give me a free hand to take charge of the planning and preparations (for YORKER) at once, or is this enterprise too heavy a burden for you to bear against the strenuous opposition which it is sure to arouse in the COS Committee? The joint committees will work overtime to damn it.

Why not throw them overboard - no one will blame you if you will allow Keyes of Zeebrugge to carry out a raid far less hazardous than Zeebrugge and infinitely less dangerous than the prompt stroke which followed three weeks later at Ostend.

If you can not do this, why not let me share your burden as Under Secretary for Defence? In such a capacity I could ensure that when a decision for undertaking an operation is made, the preparations for carrying it out are not held up by any committees, but prosecuted vigorously. It is hateful to see you being let down, as you so often have been by your technical advisors.

Or failing this, make me CNS (for which my varied experience and the responsibilities I have borne in peace and war fit me). I would give the ardent spirits who are spoiling to fight a chance, and I would represent the Navy on the COS Committee with the knowledge and the desire to make full use of its ability to wage amphibious warfare.

If Alexander won't take me for a second time as First Sea Lord why not make me First Lord. What is the use of having a First Lord in wartime like Alexander? - who understands nothing about war and has not the knowledge to select the right kind of people to form the Naval Staff we so sorely need at the moment... Nothing you could do would be more popular with the people who matter and the man in the

street than to employ me properly. Anyhow, I would only add to your burdens if I stayed where I am, under the existing conditions at the Admiralty, and I must ask you to release me from the appointment of DCO if it is to remain as it is at present...

I place myself and my sword at your service, but I am not prepared to stop in the dead alley into which I have been forced without any power to do anything of value to the country.<sup>12</sup>

Enclosed with this letter was a summation of the handling, and ultimate disregard, of his proposals of 16 August 1940.

The problem of the relations between the DCO and the COS was clearly reaching major proportions, although the writing of the above letter no doubt helped to relieve some of Keyes' anger. Churchill replied tersely on 5 February 1941.

It is quite impossible for me to receive a letter of this character. I am sure it would do you a great deal of harm if it fell into unsympathetic hands. I therefore return it to you with its enclosures. If you wish to write of matters affecting the commandos, pray do so to General Ismay.<sup>13</sup>

YORKER, an operation against Sardinia and one of Keyes' main concerns, had, in the interval, been discarded. He therefore moderated his tone considerably, but would not back down. On 6 February 1941 he sent Churchill a copy of his minute to the COS on the loading of the striking force, noting that it related to

... only one of the many miscarriages, which would have been avoided if they had allowed me to be a real DCO... It is impossible for me to continue in that office and, if you cannot make a satisfactory change, I must ask you to release me. To acquiesce in the existing conditions would be to condone inefficiency which is seriously impeding the prosecution of the war and thus delaying victory.<sup>14</sup>

12. Keyes to Churchill 4 Feb 41, DEFE 2/698 and, for the remainder of the text, K 140/3/2. This may seem like a long quote, but the original letter was over 6 pages. It gives the best idea possible of the fundamental problem in the DCO-COS relations.

13. Churchill to Keyes 5 Feb 41, PREM 3/330/7.

14. Keyes to Churchill 6 Feb 41, PREM 3/330/7.



There was apparently no immediate reply to this letter, but Keyes had made an impression. On 12 February 1941 Churchill instructed the COS to investigate Keyes' suggestion for restowing the Glens. He added 'report to me also whether the proper course<sup>15</sup> is followed in regard to Admiral Keyes and his responsibility'. Keyes had, in the meanwhile, tried to get through to Churchill by other channels. On the same day he had explained his position to Brendan Bracken, and asked him to pass on some comments to Churchill about the recent JPS paper on combined operations policy, produced without reference to the DCO, 'which is largely in disagreement with the experience and views of the Directorate of Combined Operations and if accepted, will do much to nullify Winston's and this Directorate's efforts to prosecute the war'. Keyes again claimed that

...until there is a real DCO with proper authority, serious miscarriages by the service departments are inevitable. Shipping miscarriages have been repeated in every combined operation actually carried out to date and in every one<sup>16</sup> for which preparation has been made - without exception.

Bracken apparently did speak to Churchill on the matter, and then told Keyes that he should hold on to the position of DCO despite<sup>17</sup> disappointments. 'It may yet give you the scope you desire.'

Faced with these disagreements, Churchill started working, seemingly on his own, on a new directive for Keyes. On 1 March 1941 he wrote to Ismay that, in view of the changes that had taken place since the original directive had been promulgated, the responsibilities of the DCO should be redefined. At the same time, however, he felt that it must be realised that the division of

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15. Churchill to Ismay 12 Feb 41, PREM 3/124/2.

16. Keyes to Bracken 12 Feb 41, K 140/3/2.

17. Bracken to Keyes 18 Feb 41, K 140/3/2.

responsibility between the DCO and the JPS was 'not capable of precise definition', and borderline cases would have to be settled as they arose 'by mutual consent'. It is most surprising that, after the past argument, Churchill could hold out any hopes for a mutual agreement, but this principle was retained in the list of responsibilities he then laid down. This list was to constitute, almost verbatim, the text of the new directive.

Ismay gave this note to the COS at their meeting on 3 March 1941. They decided to ask Keyes to consider the list and to put forward any points he wished to in regard to the detailed arrangements necessary to give effect to Churchill's instructions.<sup>18</sup> Keyes disliked some of the points in the draft, particularly one which seemed to make him an 'adviser to the JPS on the technical aspect of landing operations'. He told Ismay on 6 March 1941 that, if the revised directive stood, the title of DCO would be an 'absurd anomaly'. He was not prepared to be called 'DCO' under the new directive, as the term implied that he had some responsibilities for the planning and preparation of combined operations, whereas he would have, in reality, none. He therefore did not wish to be associated with operations which 'would be bound to be unsatisfactory and ill-prepared under the existing regime'. He would prefer, if he were to be limited to the Special Service troops and raiding,<sup>19</sup> to have a new name.

Ismay suggested an amendment which stipulated that the DCO should be present at COS meetings when opposed landings were under

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18. COS(41) 79 Mtg 3 Mar 41, CAB 79/9.

19. Notes by Keyes 4 and 6 Mar 41, K 13/1.



consideration, and that his staff should likewise be represented  
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 in the JPS meetings. Keyes accepted this, but requested that  
 it be altered slightly to ensure that the sequence of planning was  
 mentioned. In many cases, such as the JPS paper on combined opera-  
 tions policy, the DCO had been involved only after the paper was  
 completed. This was extremely wasteful in both time and effort;  
 if he was brought in at the beginning, he could prevent errors  
 resulting from faulty assumptions by those who did not have the  
 specialised knowledge of his Directorate. He also wanted to add  
 a sub-paragraph on the responsibility of the DCO in regard to the  
 'production and allotment' of special landing craft, a subject  
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 which had been omitted in the draft.

The COS considered both the draft and Keyes' suggestions on  
 11 March 1941. They accepted Keyes' amendments, but made minor  
 changes in the text, with the intent of keeping Keyes' responsi-  
 bilities limited both to the tactical allocation of assault shipping  
 and craft- which would prevent future arguments such as that re-  
 garding the disposition of the striking force, and to the advice  
 and consent to the outline plans of the JPS - which would avoid  
 22  
 difficulties in the preparation of the detailed plans by the EPS.  
 Keyes was then shown these changes, and, most surprisingly, agreed  
 23  
 that they were an 'improvement'.

The directive was then sent to Churchill for final approval.  
 He added a sub-paragraph to ensure that the FOPS was retained under

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20. Ismay to Keyes 7 Mar 41, K 13/1

21. Keyes to Ismay 10 Mar 41, K 13/1.

22. COS(41) 93 Mtg 11 Mar 41, CAB 79/9.

23. Keyes to Ismay 12 Mar 41, K 13/1.

his personal control and then approved the draft. The new directive, contained in Appendix C, was promulgated on 14 March 1941.<sup>24</sup> After eight months Keyes had finally secured a new directive, more in tune with the responsibilities of the Directorate as they had evolved during the build-up of the amphibious forces. It was to be no panacea, however. The emphasis was clearly on the technical and tactical nature of Keyes' position as an adviser, which would not result in his interference with strategic planning. The directive admitted, however, that there was no exact boundary between Keyes' responsibilities and those of the JPS. The reliance on mutual consultation, considering the evidence of a fundamental divergence of outlook between the parties involved, certainly seemed a trifle optimistic, and the lack of any system for the resolution of disputes would continue to produce confrontations at the highest levels, as had been so marked in the previous months. The intent of the directive would also not be followed in many cases, either by Keyes, Churchill, the COS, or the JPS. In all, the outlook for the future was not promising.

The despatch of the three Glens and the three Commandos, termed 'Layforce' after their commander Brigadier R.E. Laycock, to the Middle East at the end of January 1941 was the occasion for a number of changes in the Combined Operations organisation. Churchill directed that the strength of the Special Service troops left in the United Kingdom be brought back up to a figure of 5,000 men, and this opportunity was taken to make the last major change in their organisation. On 12 February 1941 the COS agreed to COHQ proposals that the unwieldy Special Service Battalions be done away with, the Special

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24. COS(41) 166 'Directive to Director of Combined Operations' 14 Mar 41, CAB 80/26.



Service Brigade being reorganised to contain eight Commandos of six troops each, rather than the ten troops each of the earlier Commandos. The Royal Marines would later convert their battalions to Commandos, and a number of Special Service Brigade headquarters would be formed, but the form was now set for these forces for the remainder of the war.<sup>25</sup>

The War Office was also in the process of reorganisation. Owing to the increasing control of the Special Service troops exercised by the COHQ, MO 9 was disbanded in March 1941. The DMO&P, Major General Sir John Kennedy, assured Keyes that, although Keyes might feel that his 'direct link had been sacrificed', he was confident that the new arrangement of the COHQ dealing direct with the War Office sections concerned would result in a more direct and rapid handling of Keyes' requirements. As No. 11 Special Air Service Battalion and the Central Landing Establishment, its parachute training organisation, now went direct to SD 4 for airborne matters, all links between the COHQ and the airborne forces were henceforth effectively severed.<sup>26</sup>

There was also a personnel change in the COHQ, as Keyes' relations with Hornby, the DDCO, had never been entirely satisfactory. On 8 April 1941 he therefore approached the VCIGS for assistance in finding a replacement.<sup>27</sup> Haining selected Major General James Drew, who had just given up the 52nd Division because of age. Keyes readily accepted Drew, asking that, as he felt that a brigadier was

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25. 'Minutes of WO Meeting on Reorganisation of SS Troops' 9 Feb 41, DEFE 2/54 and COS (41) 50 Mtg 12 Feb 41, CAB 79/9

26. DMO&P to DCO 22 Mar 41; Mo 9 to 11 SAS Bn 22 Mar 41; and DDMO(H) to Commander SS Bde 23 Mar 41, WO 193/379.

27. Keyes to Haining 8 Apr 41, DEFE 2/698.

perhaps too junior as DDCO, Drew be permitted to retain his rank. There were further problems with the Treasury, who, under pressure from the War Office, agreed 'in the special circumstances that a Major General can be borne for the time being in the Brigadier's post at the DCO'. Keyes testily requested that the attention of the Treasury be drawn to the fact that the original incumbent of the post was a lieutenant general, and it was at Keyes' own suggestion that his replacement be a brigadier. It was niggling obstructionism of this sort that plagued Keyes throughout his tenure as DCO, and added to his frustration. Drew assumed the post of DDCO on 21 April 1941, and was to continue in that position throughout the year.<sup>29</sup>

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28. Haining to Keyes 11 Apr 41 and Keyes to Haining 12 Apr 41, DEFE 2/698.

29. Haining to Keyes 19 Apr 41 and Keyes to Haining 22 Apr 41, DEFE 2/698.



CHAPTER VIIICOMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (5)THE AMPHIBIOUS STRIKING FORCE

A change in Keyes' thinking on combined operations had become apparent during the mounting of WORKSHOP. The force assembled for WORKSHOP had originally been intended solely for that operation. As Keyes took over command of the force and trained it, he gradually developed the idea that it was a general purpose amphibious assault force. There were a number of contingency operations being mooted in the winter of 1940, and Keyes thought that the 'striking force' he now had under his command could be used for any of them. This was never fully accepted by the service departments, as it in effect would have made Keyes the major figure in any combined operations, a position the planning staffs had tried to avoid from the start. Keyes' feeling of proprietorship of the striking force was evident in the disputes leading up to the second Directive. With the departure of the Glens for the Middle East, Keyes immediately started working on the reconstitution of an assault force in the United Kingdom.

He noted that he would have to 'start again', but, by making use of all the landing craft available in home waters, and improvising the means of carrying them, he could overcome the transport problem. With the commandos Keyes had in hand, and the Royal Marines, a force of 6,000 could be created. Keyes told Churchill that, being a sailor, he 'could legitimately command' this force. Combined operations, he had concluded, must be conducted by one supreme commander, who, in the

case of a raid by such a force, should be a naval officer.<sup>1</sup>

The Royal Marine Brigade of four battalions had been reformed into two brigades for the contingency operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes. At the instigation of the Admiralty, the COS on 9 August 1940 had approved the creation of a Royal Marine Division of three brigades of two battalions each, to be used as an assault force for amphibious operations. There is no record of the COHQ being consulted or involved in this. The third brigade had started forming on 1 October 1940 but, as in the case of the first four battalions, the force had to be created from scratch. Progress<sup>2</sup> in establishing the brigade was slow during the winter of 1940-41.

The JPS, during the reorganisation of the commandos, worked on a study concerning the requirements for the Royal Marine Division. The previous use of the commandos in an amphibious assault force and Keyes' apparent intentions of recreating another such assault force with the commandos remaining in the United Kingdom caused the JPS to widen the scope of its investigation. They decided that the first step should be the determination of the most profitable employment of the units available for amphibious operations - the Special Service troops, the Royal Marines, and the field army - and on 6 February they presented a report on this. In examining the role of the Special Service troops, the Joint Planning Staff found themselves opposed to Keyes' and Churchill's conception of their use as

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1. Keyes to Churchill 4 Feb 41, DEFE 2/698.

2. Date taken from Navy List issue of 1940, published by the Admiralty. Interview of Major General J.L. Moulton by author, 10 Nov 78. For further details on the Royal Marine Units, see J.D. Ladd, The Royal Marines 1919-1980 (London 1980), pp. 364-381.



specialist assault troops for amphibious operations, a task they had assumed because of the ban on small raids and the Royal Marines' commitment to other contingency operations. The JPS now correctly pointed out that the commandos lacked adequate combat support and administrative services, thus limiting seriously the extent to which a successful landing could be exploited. Although for a short time, and at a limited distance, the Special Service troops could provide a greater measure of surprise, mobility on foot, and short-range firepower, they were not as effective as a normal field unit for landing operations in the face of an enemy. It was 'tactically and economically unsound', therefore, 'that these troops should form the spearhead of any big landing operation'. 'Nevertheless, in combined operations, they are likely to be useful in diversions to the main operation.' The JPS consequently recommended that the Special Service troops concentrate on raiding and, surprisingly, unconventional warfare. The assault role in minor operations could be carried out by the Royal Marine Division, while any large operations could be carried out by field army units.

The COS considered this report on 12 February 1941. Curiously, they did not endorse the views of the JPS on the role of the Special Service troops, declaring instead that they were 'irrelevant to the subject and had not been called for'. It is hard to discern the reasons for this abrupt rejection, other than a deference to the vested interests of the parties concerned. The heated controversy over Keyes' authority as the DCO was then still in progress, and the commandos were, after all, one of Churchill's proteges. In any event, the

failure to seize this opportunity to define the relationship and function of the Special Service troops in regard to the other forces available would lead to further difficulties. The commandos would become a part of the new amphibious striking force being created,<sup>4</sup> and would further complicate the question of command authority.

After the review of the report above, a further study was initiated on the projected amphibious capability to October 1941. This was ready by 18 February 1941, but resulted in no immediate<sup>5</sup> action being taken to constitute another amphibious force. The JPS were at the time involved in examining proposed operations in the western and central Mediterranean, while Keyes was engaged in CLAYMORE, a raiding operation against the Lofoten Islands.

As discussions on operations in the Middle East and at home continued through March, Keyes once again brought up the subject of recreating a striking force. In a formal report on the COHQ's activities, issued on 21 March 1941, he repeated the request for the inclusion of the Royal Marine brigades in the DCO's command. The cancellation of BRISK and SHRAPNEL would free these troops for other operations, keeping in mind the fact that they were to form the basis<sup>6</sup> for the Royal Marine Division. Keyes was at this time considering another operation against Sardinia, GARROTTER, which Churchill had asked him to plan. In order to conduct this operation, Keyes esti-

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4. COS(41) 50 Mtg 12 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.

5. COS(41) 108 'Special Ships and Landing Craft for Combined Operations' 18 Feb 41, and COS(41) 115 'Raiding Craft Carriers' 25 Feb 41, CAB 80/26.

6. Report by DCO 21 Mar 41, DEFE 2/785.



mated that the Kenya, Karanja, and Sobieski, the two Dutch LSI(M), and four Belgian LSI(S) would be required to carry landing craft. The Ulster Monarch, Royal Scotsman, and a fast liner could also be used to transport troops. The total force would consist of the two Royal Marine Brigades, including the 3th A&SH, and seven Commandos, a total of over 7,000 men.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after this Keyes suggested that, whether or not GARROTTER was carried out, the British would be 'well advised' to assemble and organise the amphibious striking force, and to prepare the necessary shipping. He thought it important that the commanders, staffs, and troops should be able to work together beforehand. The commanders and staffs could study the whole range of possible operations - YORKER, GARROTTER, BRISK, SHRAPNEL, TRUCK, the capture of Las Palmas or Tenerife, or any other project - and work out detailed plans. They could thus be ready to carry out these operations at the shortest possible notice. There would be, Keyes felt, 'a great deal to be gained and nothing that will be lost in the assembly of such a force'.<sup>8</sup> The COS approved this in principle on 27 March 1941, although they asked to see Keyes before they would issue any definite instructions. It was also agreed that, of the possible projects listed, the force, when formed, should give priority to those against the Atlantic islands.<sup>9</sup> Keyes met the COS on 28 March 1941 to discuss this. The temporary harmony that existed after the promulgation of the new Directive is illustrated by the fact that the pertinent section of the minutes was.

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7. COS(41) 65 (0) 'Operation GARROTTER' 22 Mar 41, CAB 80/57. In COS (41) 68 (0) 'Assembly of a Striking Force' 26 Mar 41, CAB 80/57, Keyes says four Belgian LSI(S) will be used.
  8. COS(41) 68 (0) 'Assembly of a Striking Force' 26 Mar 41, CAB 80/57.
  9. COS(41) 111 Mtg 27 Mar 41, CAB 79/10

sent to Keyes for vetting, and was not included in the published<sup>10</sup> edition of that day's meeting.

Keyes explained the details of the force, which would consist of the ships and troops mentioned above. The force would assemble at Loch Fyne under a military commander and a naval officer, to be designated as 'SNO Transports'. The VACTC would be the area commander, and it was obviously Keyes' intention that the force would come under the COHQ. The COS approved the composition of the force in principle, although it felt that the actual composition should be left for further<sup>11</sup> study by the JPS and the DCO's staff. Major General R.G. Sturges, RM, was appointed to command the force. The meeting also covered the procedures for planning the operations of the force. Pound had proposed 'that the two staffs, the JPS and the staff of the DCO, should, for the purpose of preparing the plans, be regarded as one staff and should work in close consultation. Plans would be submitted to the COS who would discuss them with the DCO.' Keyes agreed to this, considering it 'most satisfactory'. This might have worked if measures had been taken to fuse the two staffs under central direction, but they were in fact to continue, as before, as somewhat competitive entities. As so often happened, the failure to designate specific responsibilities would lead to future dissention.

Pound also considered that the plans should be prepared and the forces organised with definite operations in mind. Priority would go first to an opposed landing against the Germans in the Azores, if possible with a simultaneous assault on the Cape Verdes. If this was

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10. Hollis to Keyes 28 Mar 41, K 13/9.

11. Ultimately all six Belgian LSI(S) were to be included, as the Sobieski was needed for trooping.



not possible, the Azores would be occupied first. Second priority would be a landing in the Canaries against Spanish opposition. Landings with little or no opposition in either case would be covered by the plans for the more difficult opposed landings.

This planning procedure would supersede guidance given for the operations against the Atlantic islands only a few days previously. Furthermore, the arrangements were not quite in line with the DCO Directive that had recently been approved.

At the COS meeting on the next day, 29 March 1941, without Keyes, but with the JPS, it was suggested that

... it would be a great pity to ask the Prime Minister to make any amendment to a document which both the COS and DCO had agreed upon less than a fortnight ago. Moreover it was thought that there was nothing in the arrangements which were made yesterday that was in any way contrary to the spirit of the Prime Minister's directive.

This was accepted by the committee, and the effectiveness of the organisation for combined operations consequently was to rest on the 'spirit' of the directive. It is questionable whether this discussion of the directive, without Keyes present, could itself be thought to be in the 'spirit' of the directive. That this reliance on the 'spirit' was unsound would be soon apparent, for the steps taken to implement the formation of the force revealed differences between the DCO and the JPS regarding the command and control arrangements. All the controversies of the past were to be repeated.

The JPS and the COHQ started joint work on the plans for the capture of the Portuguese Atlantic islands, but nothing concrete was

done to assemble the force. On 10 April 1941 the COS noted that the force had not yet gathered at Loch Fyne, but, rather than issue any definite instructions, they merely asked the JPS to report on the progress made in determining the composition of the force, and in assembling it.<sup>13</sup> The fault apparently lay in the coordination made by the JPS, for by 15 April 1941 Keyes was bitterly complaining about the lack of progress. He noted that the COS had 'almost enthusiastically' approved the formation of the force three weeks before, but, though he had done everything in his power to accelerate its formation, 'it will be ages before it is ready to strike under the existing system, by which every move must be vetted and approved by inter-service committees'. Keyes was particularly upset because he had just learned that the operations in the Middle East, for which he had been forced to give up the Glens and the commandos, had been postponed for two months. His frustration at missed opportunities was again growing, and with it his desire for greater authority over offensive operations.<sup>14</sup>

There is no record of the JPS reply on the formation of the striking force, but Keyes met the COS on 23 April 1941 to discuss the matter. Although the plans for the operations against the Atlantic islands were now ready for their consideration, the COS were 'gravely concerned' to learn that little progress had been made with the assembly of both the forces and the shipping necessary to put them into effect. The position in the Iberian peninsula had seemingly deteriorated to the extent that it was desirable for the force to be

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13. COS(41) 130 Mtg 10 Apr 41, CAB 79/10.

14. Keyes to Bracken 15 Apr 41, K 140/3/2.



at 48 hours notice to sail as soon as possible. The JPS were therefore instructed to expedite the completion of the plans, and the DCO was invited, in consultation with the JPS, to go ahead at once with the assembly and organisation of the required forces and shipping. This did not solve the problem of the lack of unified effort between the two staffs, but it did give Keyes a slightly increased authority<sup>15</sup> in forming the force.

The command arrangements were to change, albeit imperceptibly at first, starting the very next day. The JPS had revised their opinions on the strategic importance of the Atlantic islands, and now recommended that an expedition be prepared to seize the Canaries rather than the Azores. This was approved by a COS meeting, chaired by Churchill, on 24 April 1941 as Operation PUMA. Sturges and Rear Admiral J.C. Hamilton, Rear Admiral (D) Home Fleet, were nominated as the joint commanders for planning. They were immediately to draw<sup>16</sup> up detailed plans, on the basis of the JPS outline.

Although the DCO's staff had apparently collaborated on the JPS report, which reflected the DCO's views, the net effect was the strengthening of the tie between the commanders and the JPS. Rather than the DCO's staff and the JPS being considered as one, as Pound had foreseen, the DCO's staff was progressively squeezed out of the planning. The subordination of the joint commanders also slowly changed, from the DCO - through the VACTC - to a position directly under the COS, with the JPS as a link. The appointment of Hamilton served to increase this split. Instead of the CTC and the striking

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15. COS(41) 144 Mtg 23 Apr 41, CAB 79/11.

16. COS(41) 146 and 147 Mtgs 24 Apr 41, CAB 79/11.

force working together to develop expertise and doctrine, they became separate, and competing, organisations. This may have been tolerable for a short period, with a definite date for executing PUMA, but it would be a festering sore if PUMA was continually postponed, leaving the amphibious force on notice for extended periods. This, as had been the case with so many previous operations, was exactly what would happen.

Added to these problems was Keyes' desire for command. When he was given authority to organise the striking force, he knew that PUMA was being developed, and told the COS on 24 April 1941 that he approved of it. When PUMA was formally approved, he stated that 'inter-service committees can, of course, give invaluable help, but joint authority and responsibility is bound to reproduce the miscarriages and confusion which has characterised almost all combined operations in the past'. He therefore suggested to Ismay that he should be given the complete responsibility for operations of the amphibious force in the Atlantic.<sup>17</sup> Keyes, in his judgement of the detrimental effects of the division of responsibility, was entirely correct, and his solution was valid, but he did not expect that the agency ultimately to be excluded would be his own. This process of exclusion started early on, for it was during the joint commanders' first meeting with the COS and Keyes, on 26 April 1941, called to discuss the outline plans and the commanders' draft directives, that Sturges suggested that the coordination procedure described should be amended. He thought, rightfully, that it would be 'easier' for the commanders if they could deal with the departments concerned through the JPS. This would prevent their hav-

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17. Keyes to Ismay 24 Apr 41, PREM 3/361/1.



ing to deal with two staffs, the DCO's staff and the JPS, simultaneously. This was agreed to by all concerned.<sup>18</sup> It was not fully realised at the time, but this gave the JPS a major advantage in disputes with the DCO. The split would become major when Sturges was replaced as the military commander by Lieutenant General H.R.G. Alexander. The stage was set for yet another confrontation.

CHAPTER IXCOMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (6)THE APPOINTMENT OF COMMODORE LORD LOUIS MOUNTBATTENAS ADVISER ON COMBINED OPERATIONS AND THE THIRD DIRECTIVE

Keyes and the COHQ were cut off almost entirely from further planning for PUMA after the appointment of Alexander. The full dress rehearsal, termed LEAPFROG, for the Canaries operations, re-named PILGRIM, was held in the second week of August 1941, and Keyes went as an observer.

The rehearsal, directed by the joint commanders, and with the King as a witness, was in most respects a failure. The beach reconnaissance was poor, the craft were landed in the wrong place, and the beach organisation was lacking. Both tank assault ships grounded, and the unloading of the force was dilatory. The signals organisation was poor, and the handling of craft was open to criticism. Air co-operation was minimal.

Keyes had not spoken to the joint commanders immediately after the exercise, but on 18 August he sent Hamilton a letter containing a number of criticisms 'mainly directed against the senior officers who were responsible for the delays and miscarriages which ought not to have occurred'. Keyes noted that the joint commanders had every facility for training the force for two months prior to the exercise, which, until shortly beforehand, was to have been the final rehearsal before sailing. He considered it 'distressing, therefore, to watch the proceedings on 10 August, for they disclosed a deplorable lack of organisation to overcome the hazards and diffi-



culties of such a formidable enterprise'. In his opinion virtually nothing had been learned from past experience; otherwise the majority of the difficulties of LEAPFROG could have been avoided. Keyes pointed out several examples, good and bad, from the Gallipoli landings that were applicable. Keyes thought the commanders had sufficient opportunity to prepare for the operation, but 'combined operations are immensely difficult to execute, and they certainly cannot be undertaken with the light-hearted optimism which I have heard in connection with PILGRIM nor in the manner in which LEAPFROG was conducted'. He stressed the effectiveness and quick tempo of German operations, with which he had firsthand experience, and so he had<sup>1</sup> watched the 'leisurely proceedings' of LEAPFROG 'with dismay'. Keyes also sent a letter to Alexander, but, as his criticisms had been primarily naval, this was much more restrained. Keyes also had his eye on Alexander's support for some alternative uses of the<sup>2</sup> PILGRIM force.

After Alexander declined to support Keyes' alternative projects Keyes took a harder line. On 22 August 1941 he told Alexander that, while he agreed with the principal lessons that had been enunciated in the joint commanders' report on LEAPFROG, it 'should not have been necessary to stage an altogether abortive exercise' in order to demonstrate them. He nevertheless attempted to enlist Alexander's support for the general-purpose training of the amphibious striking<sup>3</sup> force, rather than the concentration on one particular operation.

The joint commanders naturally reacted to this stinging criti-

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1. Keyes to Hamilton 18 Aug 41, DEFE 2/698.

2. Keyes to Alexander 19 Aug 41, DEFE 2/698.

3. Keyes to Alexander 22 Aug 41, DEFE 2/698.

cism. On 23 August 1941 they produced a joint paper - although the main contributor appears to have been Hamilton - in which they justified the conduct of LEAPFROG. It was the first large scale exercise of its kind, and 'it is only through practical experience on a large scale that faults and difficulties will come to light'. As far as they were concerned, it was 'obvious that the study of opposed landings was still in its early stages and that there is still a great deal to be learned'. What Keyes thought of this argument has already been made clear.

The paper went much further, however, countering Keyes' criticisms by declaring that

... the machinery for the execution of combined operations, including training, is basically at fault and, in the light of our present experience, we would recommend that force commanders be directed to deal solely with the service ministries and not be partially responsible to an outside Directorate, thus avoiding divided control at the outset which is bound to lead to confusion and chaos.

The battle lines were being set. The commanders went on to say that the COHQ should be replaced with bodies in each service ministry which should be collectively charged with long term training and technical development. This collective group would exercise its functions through the CTC at Inverary for basic training and through an operational training centre at Largs for the training of large formations prior to mounting operations, as well as through the ISTDC. For the execution of special operations, the EPS was considered sufficient. These proposals were put forward on the justification that the size and requirements of large expeditions were such that only the service ministries could provide the technical and staff facilities needed to plan, train, and launch them. The commanders also



considered that no outside department could exercise the executive  
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 authority already enjoyed by the service departments.

The impact of this report was bolstered by a general feeling then existing in the War Office that a reorganisation of the system for the control and execution of combined operations was necessary. Doubts on the current system were evidenced by Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall, the VCIGS, who thought that it was time that a study, from operations in the current war, be made of the broad lessons of strategic planning of combined operations. This would serve as a guide to commanders and staffs involved in future operations. Pownall therefore wanted an inter-service committee, with representatives of the service ministries and the COHQ, to be set  
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 up and directed to prepare a short report.

The CIGS was also concerned about extending the responsibilities of the C-in-C Home Forces to include the planning and execution of any large scale operations forecast on the Continent, on the basis that the C-in-C would provide the troops involved. The commanders and staffs concerned should therefore be brought into the planning at the earliest possible stage. This task would still be secondary to the planning for the defence of the United Kingdom. If this were agreed upon Dill thought that the C-in-C should be provided with an inter-service staff to assist in the formulation of plans. This proposal was not intended to supersede or duplicate the existing planning machinery, nor was it intended to be linked with the sugges-

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4. COS(41) 178 (0) 'Remarks on Opposed Landings by Force Commanders Operation PILGRIM' 23 Aug 41, CAB 80/59.

5. COS(41) 512 'Study of Combined Operations' 22 Aug 41, CAB 80/30.

tions for reorganising the combined operations training machinery. Nevertheless, it did make a contribution to the growing controversy.<sup>6</sup>

The COS took note of Pownall's paper on 25 August 1941, but agreed to defer consideration of the proposal until the paper from the joint commanders was examined. The War Office brief on the commanders' paper - most probably prepared by Pownall - supported their contentions, and suggested that the Admiralty and the War Office, though not the DCO,<sup>7</sup> should be asked for proposals for the reorganisation of the system. Pownall was no supporter of Keyes, whom he termed 'a great nuisance'. Pownall was firmly on the side of the joint commanders in the dispute, and considered Keyes' 'interference' unwarranted. 'But Winston put him in and it's the devil of a job to get him out', Pownall wrote in his diary on 20 September 1941.<sup>8</sup> The joint commanders then met the COS, on 26 August 1941, to expand on their suggestions. Although the COS listened attentively,<sup>9</sup> no action was decided upon at this time.

Keyes had heard something of the joint commanders' proposals, but he had difficulty in obtaining a copy of their paper. In the interim he also considered some changes in the organisation for combined operations. As the forecast for 1942 called for larger numbers of troops at Inverary than had been planned upon at its

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6. Notes on COS(41) 520 27 Aug 41, WO 106/4117.

7. WO Brief on COS(41) 178 (0) 25 Aug 41, WO 193/794

8. Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Pownall, Chief of Staff, edited by B. Bond (London 1974), pp. 43-44. Keyes had an equally low opinion of Pownall. He noted to Ismay in a letter on 19 Nov 41, based on what he had seen of Pownall during the campaign in the Low Countries, 'it alarms me to think of his having any position of responsibility', K 13/17.

9. COS(41) 297 Mtg 26 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.



establishment, the CTC would need some reinforcement. Keyes also thought it illogical that there should be two separate training organisations, one for his troops for raids and one for larger operations. In order to promote a 'stronger and closer' working connection between the DCO and the service ministries he proposed setting up a main inter-service committee on combined operations, with himself as chairman and the ACNS, DMT, a representative from the Air Ministry, and the DDCO as members. A subordinate committee, with the DDCO as chairman and staff officers of the 1st Grade from the service ministries, would also be established. The main committee would meet occasionally to decide training policy, while the detailed supervision of the CTC would be the responsibility of the subordinate committee. The staff officers from the service departments would act as general liaison officers for all combined operations questions, other than planning, for their departments.

Keyes' proposal was referred to the VCOS for a preliminary investigation of its implications. They were in general agreement with the DCO's thoughts on training, incorporating them in a new outline organisation for combined operations. This new organisation followed Keyes' proposals on training and equipment exactly, but added a section on planning that showed a chain from the COS to the JPS for outline planning, and from the COS to the force commanders for detailed planning. The DCO was to liaise with the force commanders, but was cut out of the outline planning process completely. The intent was clear.

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10. COS(41) 185 (0) 'Training for Combined Operations' 30 Aug 41, CAB 80/59.

11. COS(41) 540 'Organisation for Combined Operations' 3 Sep 40, CAB 80/30.

Keyes finally managed to obtain a copy of the joint commanders' paper on 30 August 1941, and was predictably outraged. He had by then already drafted a long memorandum outlining the development of the second striking force since his proposal on 25 March 1941, pointing out that he had been steadily excluded from the planning and preparations for its employment. The joint commanders had turned down his offer of rooms to work in, as had been done earlier and in the case of THRUSTER, and had remained within the Admiralty. All the plans for PILGRIM and LEAPFROG had been worked out without any reference to the DCO, the ADCO(N), or the CTC. He would, therefore, accept no responsibility for the miscarriages encountered in LEAPFROG and considered that the commanders, in particular Hamilton, were attempting in an unwarranted manner to shift the blame onto his Directorate.<sup>12</sup>

Keyes was partially mollified when Alexander came to see him on 30 August 1941, claiming that the intention had been 'to strengthen my Directorate'.<sup>13</sup> Keyes had also spoken to Ismay about the joint commanders' proposal, and was assured that 'the COS did not take it seriously',<sup>14</sup> and that 'in fact it was nonsense'. As it had been 'placed in the records of the COS Committee', however, Keyes insisted on sending the COS his observations on the paper.

These comments were fairly acid ones, for although Keyes maintained that he had always had friendly relations with the military members of the EPS, he did not think 'that the naval members of the

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12. COS(41) 542 'Landing Operations' 2 Sep 41, CAB 80/30.

13. Note, COS(41) 31 Mtg (0) 30 Aug 41, K 13/9.

14. Note by Keyes 2 Sep 41, K 13/1.



EPS can be disassociated from the attempt to ignore my Directorate and to eliminate the DCO from any part of the "machinery for the execution of combined operations". He emphasised that after about 8 July 1941 the joint commanders had operated totally independently of the DCO and CTC - in effect under the new system they proposed - and the result was the mediocre performance of LEAPFROG. He included his own suggestions for the smoother working of the Directorate. He complained that, particularly for PUMA and PILGRIM, papers had been circulated which 'vitally affected the functions of the DCO', but to which he had been denied access, in contravention of his directive of 14 March 1941. 'It is impossible for the DCO to function under conditions of divided authority'. He considered that all operations either came into his scope or not. If they did, they were classified as a 'DCO operation'.

It should then follow that in regard to all that concerns or arises out of such operations, DCO is the directing or consulting authority. All papers affecting the operation should be referred to him and no action of any sort which affects the operation should be taken without prior consultations with DCO and, especially, without the opportunity being afforded him to record his views on proposals with which he disagrees.

It is also considered that the officer or officers appointed to command a 'DCO operation' should, during the planning stage, establish offices in the premises allotted to the DCO and work in the closest cooperation under him.<sup>15</sup>

The complaints about the disregard of his directive were valid, but in view of the fact that almost all the offensive operations contemplated would, by their nature, be 'DCO operations', this was a rather sweeping demand. It was obviously in complete opposition to the intent of the VCOS proposal for reorganisation.

Keyes asked Churchill for an interview on 2 September 1941. Between the differences of opinion over the dispersion of the PILGRIM force for the winter and over the organisation for planning and mounting combined operations, Keyes despaired of exercising any influence.

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15. COS(41) 190 (0) Keyes to COS 3 Sep 41, CAB 80/59.

... You are now in a position to prevent the COS losing the war, but they will certainly postpone victory so long as they are guided by the advice of the inter-service committees of comparatively junior officers, without practical war experience to justify their dictation as to what can or cannot be done.

Their chief object seems to be to array all the difficulties and dangers of any offensive operation which is within our powers to carry out, generally by proposing as preferable something far more hazardous and formidable, which they know to be impracticable...

I am so consistently discredited by your advisers that I have to blow my own trumpet to remind you that I have not yet acquired patience and am tired of having to waste time and energy in trying to overcome the supine objections of our own people, in order to be allowed to make real war upon the enemy.<sup>16</sup>

The COS met on 4 September 1941 to consider the VCOS recommendations and Keyes' proposals. Keyes was not invited, and the COS merely took note of his papers. They then made a few minor amendments to the VCOS organisation and sent it to Keyes for comment. They made it clear that the EPS would coordinate with the force commanders for detailed planning, the DCO's staff being contacted for technical advice only.<sup>17</sup> Hollis, who drew up the covering note to Keyes, made haste to point out that the organisation for training was identical to Keyes' own proposal. He also assured Keyes that the scheme for operations would only apply to those which did not come into the category of 'DCO operations'. This was not, however, really addressing the problem at hand, for Hollis was using the term 'DCO operations' in respect to raiding operations under 5,000, which had always been acknowledged as Keyes' responsibility, and was ignoring Keyes' definition of the term as<sup>18</sup> all those operations involving opposed landings.

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16. Keyes to Churchill 2 Sep 41, DEFE 2/698.

17. COS(41) 311 Mtg 4 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.

18. Hollis to Keyes 4 Sep 41, K 13/1.



Keyes replied immediately, reaffirming his definition of a 'DCO operation' and stating that he was not prepared to accept the proposed reorganisation. At the same time he lodged a further complaint about the consultative arrangements in his directive being ignored by the COS.<sup>19</sup> Keyes also went to see Churchill, and their five minute meeting ended with some fairly strong words being exchanged. Keyes then wrote a long letter to Churchill - his usual practice. He covered the history of the Admiralty opposition to the DCO and his problems with the service departments over PILGRIM. He re-iterated that the procedure now being suggested was actually that which had been followed in the later stages of PILGRIM, and that he could not accept it. He was willing to accept the entire responsibility for the training of the amphibious force, provided that he was given executive authority by the COS and Churchill. 'Failing this, I am not prepared to allow my name to be associated with combined operations, since I am certain to be considered responsible when things go wrong'. In this respect he cited LEAPFROG, for which the COHQ had had no responsibility, but which was being used as an excuse for the recommendation of the elimination of COHQ altogether. This was certainly a valid point, one that was never<sup>20</sup> fully countered.

As complex as the situation already was, the COS on 8 September 1941 decided to take up Dill's earlier suggestion regarding the extension of the responsibility of the C-in-C Home Forces to the planning, organising, and training for 'operations against the Continent',

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19. Keyes to Hollis 4 Sep 41, K 13/1.

20. Keyes to Churchill 5 Sep 41, PREM 3/330/7.

as well as his other request for the transfer of much of the raid-  
 ing responsibility to Home Forces.<sup>21</sup> The COS, taking all the pro-  
 posals that had been circulating into consideration, produced a  
 draft report on the organisation for combined operations. They  
 basically expanded upon the VCOS recommendations, accepting the prin-  
 ciples involved. For operations outside of home waters, the JPS  
 would prepare an outline plan. If this was approved in principle  
 by the Defence Committee (Operations), the commanders would then be  
 appointed, and they would prepare the detailed plans in consultation  
 with the EPS. Technical advice would be sought from the DCO. After  
 the detailed plan was prepared it would be submitted to the COS, who  
 would then consult with the DCO. If the plan were then approved -  
 and there is still no mention of what the procedure would be if the  
 DCO did not approve at any stage - the plan would be submitted to the  
 Defence Committee (Operations) with the commanders present. The  
 responsibility for training the forces for the operations would then  
 lie with the commanders, though they were to 'seek help and advice'  
 from the DCO's staff. The study and design of special equipment  
 would be the DCO's only primary responsibility. For operations on  
 the Continent the C-in-C Home Forces was to be in the same position  
 as the commanders appointed for overseas expeditions. The raiding  
 organisation was to be in accordance with the C-in-C Home Forces'  
 proposals.<sup>22</sup>

Consideration of this matter was delayed in the next few days  
 because of the dispute over the dispersal of PILGRIM force. Besides  
 the detailed arguments over the disposition of the force, it was

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21. COS(41) 314 Mtg 8 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.

22. COS(41) 195 (0) 'Organisation fo Combined Operations' 8 Sep 41,  
 CAB 80/59.



clear that one of the primary issues in contention was the role of the DCO. Keyes was by now being assailed on all sides. As usual he appealed to Churchill, both to establish his authority over the training of the striking force, to prevent its dispersal, and to support his consultative position on all combined operations. This was the only way, in Keyes' opinion, that the management of amphibious warfare could be kept out of the control of the demonstrably incompetent junior officers on the committees of the service departments, so that bold offensive strokes could be made when opportunities<sup>23</sup> arose. To an extent, Keyes' position had been accepted by Churchill when he had earlier supported Keyes' criticisms of the PILGRIM plans.

After the furore over the dispersion of the PILGRIM force had died down, the COS redrafted, on 16 September 1941, their recommendations regarding the organisation for combined operations, with the result that Keyes' influence would be further decreased. This new<sup>24</sup> proposal was sent to Keyes for his comments. In Hollis' covering note, he assured Keyes of the committee's 'earnest desire to preserve all that has proved valuable of the existing arrangements and to modify only those parts of the machine which make for friction or<sup>25</sup> misunderstanding.'

This new scheme, which had the full authority of the COS, came as a shock to Keyes, particularly in view of the assurances that had earlier been given to him by the secretariat. His suspicions aroused, Keyes immediately wrote to Churchill that, in view of the

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23. See Keyes to Churchill 11 Sep 41 and Note by Keyes thereon 12 Sep 41, DEFE 2/698.

24. COS(41) 324 Mtg 16 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.

25. Hollis to Keyes 18 Sep 41, PREM 3/330/2.

appointment which had been offered him on 17 July 1940 and of his directive of 14 March 1941, he did not intend to reply to the COS<sup>26</sup> until he had an interview with the Prime Minister. Churchill was angry that Keyes should have been sent the proposal before he himself had approved it, and decided to take the matter up with the COS. Hollis then explained to Churchill that the COS had sent it to Keyes to be fair and polite, to avoid friction, and to disprove the DCO's<sup>27</sup> allegation that the COS were not giving him 'a square deal'. Churchill advocated a strange procedure indeed to frame proposals, and this is an example of one of the very things that Keyes was complaining about. The Prime Minister's position, nevertheless, must be remembered, for it was Churchill, who, on his own initiative and without proper staff coordination, drafted the last directive to Keyes. Churchill refused to see Keyes personally about this complaint, however. Keyes thereupon started working out his comments on the COS proposal, and Churchill agreed to defer any decision until he had examined these. The COS, in the meanwhile, continued discussions with the Directors of Plans and the C-in-C Home Forces on the proposed reorganisation. Keyes sent his comments on the scheme to Hollis on 25 September 1941, noting that the proposals made no reference to the command of the raiding flotillas and Special Service troops. Keyes wished to take<sup>28</sup> these up in a meeting with the COS.

Keyes' comments on the proposed reorganisation covered many<sup>29</sup> points. The COS had declared that there were two major principles which had to be recognised as affecting all large operations. The

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26. Keyes to Churchill 19 Sep 40, PREM 3/330/2.

27. Hollis to Churchill 21 Sep 41, PREM 3/330/2.

28. Keyes to Hollis 25 Sep 41, K 13/1.

29. See COS(41) 570 (REVISE) 'Interservice Organisation for Combined Operations' 22 Sep 41, CAB 80/30.



first was that the responsibility for tendering advice to the Prime Minister, Defence Committee (Operations), or War Cabinet on the strategic aspects and general feasibility of any operational plan must lie with the COS. Keyes maintained that at no time had he ever questioned this principle, and that he had only been anxious to place his experience in combined operations at their disposal. The second principle was that the commander or commanders of an operation, once appointed, must be responsible for the detailed planning, for the training of the forces allotted, and for the execution of the operation. Keyes agreed that the commanders should 'generally' be responsible for planning and training, and entirely responsible for the execution. As far as planning and training was concerned, he suggested that it be incumbent for the commanders to consult the DCO, so that if any difficulties of opinion did arise they could be placed before the COS for resolution. The COS next laid down three functions for a combined operations organisation. These were the organisation of training for troop units at the amphibious warfare schools, the research and development of specialised equipment, and the study and development of tactics and techniques. Keyes agreed to all of this, with the proviso on training mentioned above. Problems arose over the COS conception of how planning for large scale operations should work, however. It was clearly stated in their paper that it would not be done by the new combined operations organisation. The outline plans were to be prepared under the direction of the COS for approval by the government; the detailed planning would be done by the commanders. The COS noted that 'it will be advantageous for those responsible for the planning to have the benefit, on the appropriate level, of the

skilled advice of an inter-service organisation'. Keyes certainly disagreed with this, both because he thought it essential that the DCO should become involved in the initial stages of the outline planning, and because he thought that the commanders should be required to consult with the DCO rather than being given the option. The COS, in outlining the new organisation, wished to change the title of 'Director of Combined Operations' to 'Adviser on Combined Operations' (ACO) to 'distinguish the new arrangement from the old'. This certainly annoyed Keyes, who could see no advantage in the change, and who thought it would lead to a 'misapprehension of his duties and responsibilities'. In reality, under the new terms, it was an accurate description, and herein lies the difference in outlook between the COS and Keyes. The COS had also further defined the position of the C-in-C Home Forces, and had directed that the ACO would also be responsible for advising him. Before a definite decision on this new organisation was made, however, the COS wanted the machinery tested in practice, and proposed to invite the C-in-C Home Forces, in consultation with the appropriate naval and air C-in-Cs, to plan a definite operation. The organisation would then be reviewed in the light of the experience gained. The fact that the DCO was not included in these proposals for an exercise was not lost on Keyes, and he therefore wanted it made clear that the C-in-C should also be required to consult him.

In general, Keyes agreed with much of the paper produced by the COS. He pointed out, however, that except for a comment by Hollis in his covering letter that the new organisation would prevent 'friction and misunderstanding', the COS had advanced no reasons for the cancellation of his directive of 14 March 1941. The net result of



the new organisation would be to relieve the DCO of 'any executive authority or independent responsibility'. Large scale raids would be transferred to the C-in-C Home Forces, the COS would 'assume any powers the DCO may have possessed as to the general conception of plans', and the commanders of operations were relieved of the responsibility of consulting the DCO. All the 'very wide powers and responsibilities of the DCO' in his March directive would thus be 'swept away'. Considering the achievements of the COHQ, and 'failing reasons to the contrary being established', Keyes declared that he could not be expected to agree to the new organisation. He thought that the proposals contained in the COS paper should instead be married, as far as possible, to what was in his existing directive,<sup>30</sup> and proposed a meeting with the COS to this end.

The COS considered Keyes' comments at their meetings on the mornings of 26 and 27 September 1941, and made some amendments to the organisation. They altered the operational procedure slightly, so that the outline plans would be examined by the JPS with the advice of the ACO and then would be sent to the COS for consideration, with the ACO again present. Had a representative of the ACO been included permanently on the JPS, as was done later in the war, this would have been a step forward. This alteration, however, was mainly cosmetic, for the JPS had been obliged to consult with the DCO under the terms of the old directive, and this had not prevented problems from arising. The COS now included the CTSs in the organisation, placing them under the inter-service sub-committee on training, and the commandos, who would come under the CTCs when not detailed for operations. The

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30. Hollis to Churchill 25 Sep 41, PREM 3/330/2.

responsibility for small cross-Channel raids was also clearly delegated to the C-in-C Home Forces. These amendments resulted in the DCO losing his hold on the Special Service troops. His responsibility for Continental raiding was virtually eliminated, and his position in respect to raids overseas was still vague.<sup>31</sup>

Hollis told Keyes, on 28 September 1941, that he had passed Keyes' previous comments on to Churchill, and enclosed the amended COS proposals. He explained that some of the suggestions Keyes had made were incorporated in the paper, but 'the COS did not find themselves able to change their view on the major issues'.<sup>32</sup> Keyes met the COS on 29 September 1941 to present his case. This was contained in part in a summary he gave them.

I am quite prepared to direct combined operations under you, on this revised directive, and, as I have said in previous memoranda, to be responsible to you for the training and efficiency of an amphibious expeditionary force.

I am not, however, prepared to accept a directive which sweeps away the one which you gave me as recently as 14 March, with the approval of the Prime Minister, and which, thought it gives me wide advisory powers, deprives me of all the responsibility confided in me and relegates me to the position of an adviser whose advice is persistently ignored. In effect I become the chairman of yet another inter-service committee.

Of course, if the Prime Minister wishes to terminate my appointment, that is another matter.

Keyes went on to review his own proposals for a new directive.

Pound replied, detailing the reasons for the reorganisation and emphasising the 'advantages' of the new procedure, but to no avail.

The conclusions reached at this meeting are rather vague and contradictory, for the COS seemingly agreed to consider Keyes' proposals

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31. COS(41) 334 Mtg 26 Sep 41 and COS(41) 335 Mtg 27 Sep 41, CAB 79/14; COS(41) 589 'Inter-service Organisation for Combined Operations' 27 Sep 41, CAB 80/30.

32. Hollis to Keyes 28 Sep 41, K 13/1.



for a new directive while at the same time endorsing their own and  
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 instructing the secretary to send it to Churchill.

Hollis submitted everything to Churchill the evening of 29 September 1941. It is apparent that Hollis was taking the side of the COS in the matter, as his notes to Churchill became increasingly slanted. It is perhaps unfortunate that Ismay was at this time on a mission to Russia, as he understood the need for the secretariat to take a neutral attitude. Hollis emphasised how the COS had tried to accommodate Keyes, and how they had continually revised their proposals to meet his requirements. They had, for example, considered the situation further, after Keyes had left the meeting, and now suggested Keyes be called 'Adviser on Combined Operations and Commandant of CTCs', which would 'in fact give him the supervision of all training for combined operations but not the responsibility which commanders would exercise for training forces specifically allotted to them'. In many respects this was a sop, for it did not address the main point in regard to training, and would not in itself overcome the conflict between the maintenance of a general-purpose amphibious force and the indefinite holding of all available resources for a specific operation. Hollis continued that he had gone to see Keyes after the meeting, but was 'unable to convince him that the COS were prepared to give him a large measure of responsibility for the general organisation of combined operations', though they were not willing to give in on the point of his being an 'Adviser' rather than a 'Director'. Hollis admitted that the problem was getting very involved, but emphasised to Churchill that 'the

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33. COS(41) 336 Mtg 29 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.

COS have devoted a great deal of time in a genuine attempt to arrive at a working agreement', though, regrettably, 'we have so far failed to do so'.<sup>34</sup>

Churchill wrote to Keyes on 30 September expressing his hope that Keyes would be able to come to an agreement with the COS regarding the modification of his directive. He told Keyes that the title of 'Director' did not correspond to the facts, as the responsibility for advising the Defence Committee (Operations) and the War Cabinet could only rest with the COS, and that the responsibility for operations that were approved must belong to the commanders appointed. Churchill added that he believed 'very large spheres of important and interesting work' would be open to Keyes under the new directive. He warned Keyes that 'I should find it very hard to resist the advice of all my responsible experts. I trust that you will fall in therefore with the plans which have now taken shape'.<sup>35</sup>

Keyes was still attempting to have the organisation changed, and told Hollis that he would like another meeting with the COS after he had drafted his new proposals. The COS agreed to wait for these new proposals, as had apparently been decided in Keyes' last meeting with them. At the same time, however, Keyes replied petulantly to Churchill that he gathered from Churchill's note of 30 September that Churchill was terminating his appointment as DCO. Keyes then proceeded on for three more pages to vent his frustrations. He acknowledged the responsibilities of the COS and the appointed

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34. Note the use of the word 'we'. Again this is something not found in Ismay's notes. Hollis to Churchill 29 Sep 41, PREM 3/330/2.

35. Churchill to Keyes 30 Sep 41, DEFE 2/698.



commanders, but complained that his experience was not being made use of. He could not agree that there was a large and important sphere of work for him under the new arrangements, though Pound had spent considerable time in trying to convince him of this. He was convinced that the COS and the joint commanders of PILGRIM did not understand the basis of amphibious operations, and because of this the effort and material being put into such operations was not producing a reasonable return. Under the new arrangements things would not be any better. He spoke of the hostility towards his organisation, and outlined the persistent attempts to eliminate his Directorate. Pound, the JPS, and the EPS were described as the 'rocks on which any bold plan might founder'. He told Churchill that he was not prepared to be associated with combined operations in any way if he was to be merely an adviser who could have his advice ignored when inconvenient, or be made a scapegoat when things went wrong. If he were to remain, responsibility must be delegated to him by the COS 'to prevent the recurrence of a long series of miscarriages', which he had been unable to avert even under his present directive, and which had 'impeded progress and efficiency and our ability to wage war overseas'. He ended by mentioning that he was preparing new proposals for a directive, which he hoped the COS would accept.

As usual, Hollis received this letter, and in forwarding it to Churchill he commented that it was clear that Keyes would not accept the COS proposals. 'I do not think that any good can come of yet another paper from him to the COS. DCO's letter is full of inaccuracies and half truths'. This is without a doubt an unwarranted intrusion into the affair by Hollis, and most certainly was a 'half-truth'

in itself. When all was said and done, Keyes had in reality commented once on each of the two COS papers sent him, and had met the COS only once on the subject. Whether this could be considered excessive or not is a matter of judgement. But the COS on 29 September had agreed to wait for Keyes' proposals for a new directive, and this was the paper which Hollis disparagingly referred to. Hollis thus took on a position which even the COS had not maintained. Moreover, in none of the minutes to Churchill does he mention that the COS have agreed to consider this next paper. His actions in this matter certainly reflect no credit upon the secretariat, and could well be described, in Keyes' terms, as an 'intrigue'.<sup>37</sup>

Keyes was at the same time writing a further, more conciliatory, letter to Churchill, though he still rounded on the mismanagement of the amphibious force 'owing to the pusillanimous folly of your principal naval adviser'.<sup>38</sup> It was too late, however. Before Churchill had received this last letter he had minuted to Hollis that, as Keyes did not wish to accept the new arrangements, he would like the Admiralty to arrange for Keyes' relief by Lord Louis Mountbatten. On the same day, 4 October 1941, he wrote privately to Keyes, expressing his regret that Keyes would not accept the reorganisation. 'I have really done my best to accept your wishes. I have to consider first my duty to the state which ranks above personal friendship. In all circumstances I have no choice but to arrange for your relief'.<sup>39</sup>

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37. Hollis to Churchill 4 Oct 41, PREM 3/330/2 contains Hollis' comments. The events as remembered by Hollis in his book and the papers available do not tally. See Appendix H.

38. Keyes to Churchill 4 Oct 41, PREM 3/330/2.

39. Churchill to Hollis 4 Oct 41, PREM 3/330/2 and Churchill to Keyes 4 Oct 41, DEFE 2/698.



Keyes received this letter on 6 October 1941. He responded that the COS had on 29 September agreed to consider his proposals for a revised directive. He had since been working on these, and had postponed a meeting with the COS until he had finished them. He was therefore rather surprised that a decision had been made solely on the basis of the 27 September memorandum of the COS, which, although forwarded to Churchill, was in no sense a developed directive. Keyes therefore told Churchill that he hoped to reconcile the differences with the COS at their next meeting. If the question was not then resolved to their mutual satisfaction, he would step aside.<sup>40</sup> Keyes at the same time forwarded his new proposals to Hollis, asking that he be able to explain them at a COS meeting. He was now told, however, that the COS would not see him, as the matter had been taken out of their hands by the Prime Minister. This was a somewhat disingenuous reply on their part, but understandable. Keyes was finally out, and it would be expecting too much of the COS to aid in his return.

Keyes apparently regarded the matter more as a misunderstanding, and was not yet ready to accept Churchill's decision as final. Keyes wrote to Ismay on his return from Russia on 11 October 1941. He explained what happened and expressed a hope that Ismay could straighten things out, as he had often done in the past. Keyes described his last proposals, which would have made him the 'Director of Combined Training', presiding over the committee of the directors of training of the three service departments, and commanding the CTCs, assault shipping, and landing craft. He would be

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40. Keyes to Churchill 6 Oct 41, PREM 3/330/2.

responsible for all training until operations were detailed, and would then be able to turn over an efficient force to the appointed commanders. Keyes noted that he did not want the title of 'Adviser on Combined Operations', as he did not want to force his advice on anyone who did not want it, and it was clear that the COS did not want him to have anything to do with the execution of combined<sup>41</sup> operations.

Is may, who had always respected Keyes, was placed in a quandary, and decided to inform Churchill 'fully and frankly' of the contents<sup>42</sup> of Keyes' letter. Churchill then replied to Keyes, on 14 October 1941. He explained that he had asked Keyes in all seriousness on 30 September to accept the proposals of the COS, but that this had been refused on 2 October. On 6 October Keyes had again, in Churchill's opinion, indicated his unwillingness to accept their proposals, and in the meanwhile things had proceeded in accordance with Churchill's note of 4 October concerning Keyes' relief. This would be effective on 19 October 1941, when Mountbatten would be promoted to Commodore and appointed as Adviser on Combined Operations, termed 'Commodore C'. Churchill concluded, 'there can be no question of<sup>43</sup> going back on any of these arrangements'.

Keyes was certainly badly treated. His relief had occurred after only one meeting with the COS and none with Churchill, at a time when he had the agreement of the COS to his preparation of further proposals. Initially he took it very well, and on 14 October 1941 he answered Churchill 'I only grieve to have let down my splendid commandos', who were once again threatened with dispersal

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41. Keyes to Ismay 11 Oct 41, K 140/3/2.

42. Ismay to Keyes 14 Oct 41, K 140/3/21.

43. Churchill to Keyes 14 Oct 41, DEFE 2/698.



by the War Office. He was hurt that Churchill did not at least see him before his relief, or let him discuss his last proposals with the COS. He praised Mountbatten as a 'a splendid fellow and a live wire with lots of drive', and he closed by promising 'I will do all I can to give him a good start',<sup>44</sup> Keyes and Ismay parted company as good friends. Further letters of thanks for his efforts were received from the commandos, Haydon's in particular being very moving. Keyes was still hoping for further employment, and was indeed encouraged by Churchill in thinking so. The bitterness over his relief would grow as nothing happened, and he could make no contribution to war effort.<sup>45</sup>

On 9 October 1941 the secretary of the COS was directed to draw up a new directive for Keyes' successor, based on the COS memorandum of 27 September.<sup>46</sup> This was done and the directive, with minor modifications, was approved by the COS on 16 October 1941.<sup>47</sup> Mountbatten was to be designated 'Adviser on Combined Operations', which was reduced to 'ACO', though his official short title, as noted above, was 'Commodore C'. He was to act as the technical adviser on all aspects of combined operations, in all planning stages, and in training. He was to coordinate the general training policy for combined operations for all three services, and would command the CTCs. In addition he was charged with the development of tactical doctrine for all sizes of combined operations, as

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44. Keyes to Churchill 14 Oct 41, PREM 3/330/2.

45. Haydon to Keyes 19 Oct 41, K 13/21. Keyes returned to Parliament, but was never again employed in an official capacity. His opinions about the conduct of combined operations did not change. See his Amphibious Warfare and Combined Operations (Cambridge 1943), a print of the 1943 Lees Knowles Lectures.

46. COS(41) 348 Mtg 9 Oct 41, CAB 79/14.

47. COS(41) 356 Mtg 16 Oct 41, CAB 79/15 and COS(41) 629 'Combined Operations and Raids' 17 Oct 41, CAB 80/31.

well as the research and development of technical equipment peculiar to combined operations. For all operations other than very small raids, conducted by the Special Service troops under his command, he was quite firmly limited to this technical role. In regard to the small raids, he would be responsible for appointing the force commander and for the preparation of the detailed plan. The Special Service troops, regarded as specialists in combined operations, were to remain under his command, although they might be detailed to other commanders for major operations. He would serve in an advisory capacity in regard to training of the forces detailed for operations.

With the change to Mountbatten, a much more junior officer than Keyes, there was apparently a feeling in the War Office that it might be the time to regain control of the commandos, particularly as the C-in-C Home Forces was to take on a raiding responsibility. This view was even shared to some extent by personnel within the COHQ, including Major General J.S. Drew, the DDCO. The CIGS approved of this in principle and spoke to the C-in-C Home Forces about it, but preferred to wait until Mountbatten became established before making a decision.<sup>48</sup> With this in mind, Mountbatten's directive had the note inserted that the provisions regarding the commandos were subject to an early review. The entire text of the directive is reproduced in Appendix D.

The raiding directive for the C-in-C Home Forces had been approved at the same time as Mountbatten's. This authorised him to carry out raids on the French, Dutch, and Belgian coasts. In doing so he could deal directly with the appropriate air and naval command-

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48. DDCO to VCIGS 18 Oct 41 and Note by CIGS 19 Oct 41, WO 193/405; Keyes to Churchill 21 Oct 41, DEFE 2/698.



ders, and he was instructed to consult the ACO in the preparation of the plans. The COS were to be kept informed of any raids that were to be carried out.<sup>49</sup> In practice the C-in-C Home Forces delegated his authority to the GOCs of Eastern, Southeastern and Southern Commands, giving each of them the responsibility for raiding the sector of the enemy coast opposite them.

Churchill announced the replacement of Keyes to the Defence Committee (Operations) on 17 October 1941, indicating that Mountbatten 'would have rather different functions to those exercised by Sir Roger Keyes'.<sup>50</sup> Mountbatten's takeover was slightly delayed, and he first met the COS on 28 October 1941. He had, 'at first sight', no comments to make on the directive. The CIGS then asked him if he would object to the Inspector of Infantry visiting the commandos, and indicated that the War Office was working on proposals for their future administration. Mountbatten had no objections to this.<sup>51</sup> There was now a distinct change in the tone of the COHQ's dealings with the COS. Mountbatten, who had the ability to 'charm a vulture off a corpse', studiously avoided any clashes with the COS. Recognising the limitations of his position, which at the time did not entitle him to put forward papers unbidden, he refrained from intervening in COS discussions unless there was a clear consensus that it was a matter for which he bore responsibility. Although this often meant that he had to 'bite his tongue', his presence gradually became an established fact. To quote Lord Ballantrae, he was eventually 'like a piece of the furniture'.<sup>52</sup>

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49. COS(41) 630 'Raids' 16 Oct 41, CAB 80/31.

50. DO(41) 65 Mtg 17 Oct 41, CAB 69/2.

51. COS(41) 370 Mtg 28 Oct 41, CAB 79/15.

52. Quotes on Mountbatten are from interview of author with Lord Ballantrae 12 Jan 78.

This was a far cry from the days of confrontation under Keyes, and the net result was that Mountbatten attended the COS meetings frequently, as had been the original intention. In the end he possessed a far greater influence, so much so that Keyes was later to complain that the COS had accorded all to Mountbatten that they had denied to him. Certainly, Mountbatten's proposals for offensive operations received sympathetic hearings, and he was invited to virtually all the meetings on the changes in the raiding policy and the subsequent operations. Hollis, so critical of Keyes, was quick to apologise to Mountbatten on the occasions when he was not asked to meetings in which topics pertinent to the COHQ had been discussed. Circumstances soon presented real opportunities in combined operations work, and Mountbatten was the man to take advantage of them.



## CHAPTER X

### COMBINED OPERATIONS ORGANISATION (7)

#### THE FOURTH DIRECTIVE

Mountbatten had hardly taken over as ACO before he began making suggestions to improve the combined operations organisation. The meetings of the Inter-Services Committee on Training and Policy, he noted, produced results 'which demonstrate the value of a senior committee in dealing with questions of major policy'. As this committee consisted of members of the service training directorates, however, it was not quite suitable for the consideration of some of the urgent questions that were arising in regard to the air requirements for combined operations. On 22 November 1941 Mountbatten recommended that a new inter-service committee be formed to coordinate such matters, comprising himself as the chairman, the Air Commodore CTC, the Fifth Sea Lord, the VCIGS, and the VCAS, or their representatives. The terms of reference for the committee would be 'to place before the COS agreed and coordinated proposals setting out air requirements for combined operations'. This committee was approved by the COS on 9 December 1941, with the composition and terms of reference set out by Mountbatten.<sup>1</sup> It was evident that Mountbatten was adept at using the service machinery to achieve his objectives, rather than attempting to circumvent it, as Keyes had often done.

The shortage of infantry assault ships had created a situation in which it was clear that there would be no possibility of the

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1. COS(41) 686 (REVISE) 'Combined Operations - Air Committee' 22 Nov 41, CAB 89/32 and COS(41) 414 Mtg 9 Dec 41, CAB 79/16.

C-in-C Home Forces using these ships in his raiding programme 'for a long time to come'. About 5 to 6 weeks training with such ships was necessary to reach the standard considered essential for successful raiding. As the only five ships available were fully programmed, it was therefore not possible to train the C-in-C's troops to the standard already reached by the commandos. Mountbatten took this up with the C-in-C Home Forces and the GOC Southern Command, and on 2 December 1941 he told the COS that it had been generally agreed that it would be better for raids involving infantry assault ships to be left in his hands, as had been the case during Keyes' tenure. This was considered by the COS on 9 December 1941 and, after consultation with the C-in-C Home Forces, a new raiding directive was issued, 'temporarily' limiting him to raids that could be conducted by assault landing craft only. Both the ACO and the C-in-C Home Forces<sup>2</sup> were instructed to work in the closest harmony. Another difference in style was evident here, for Mountbatten's arguments were based primarily on practicability, rather than principle. This had always been the Admiralty approach, and the result was a lessening of the confrontations of the previous period.

Mountbatten had quickly begun work on the revision of the combined operations organisation, coordinating the papers, initially, on the lower levels. A memorandum was then submitted to the COS on 3 December 1941 concerning this. The COS agreed that, to save a great deal of time, each of the COS would study the proposals independently and send comments to the secretary. The only point initially agreed upon was Pound's insistence that it was 'most undesirable' that there

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2. COS(41) 718 'Raids by C-in-C Home Forces' 2 Dec 41 and COS(41) 733 'Raids by C-in-C Home Forces' 10 Dec 41, CAB 80/32; COS(41) 414 Mtg 9 Dec 41, CAB 79/16.



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be any change in the ACO's title, as Mountbatten suggested.

There was to be no repetition of the Keyes' affair.

Mountbatten met the COS the following day, 4 December 1941. He asked that he might receive copies of 'most secret' service telegrams that dealt with combined operations, and this was agreed to by the COS.<sup>4</sup> That such an obvious requirement had never been fulfilled in Keyes' tenure would be surprising, unless one was familiar with the personality clashes and the reluctance of the service department to give Keyes any information which might lead to criticisms or disputes.

On the same day Mountbatten submitted a revised memo on the combined operations organisation. Perhaps the major problem that Mountbatten had to grapple with was the scheduled increase in the landing craft and bases. These elements had originally been under the naval wing of the CTC, being administered through normal Admiralty channels and placed for operations under the SNO Landings. This ad hoc arrangement had worked adequately with the small numbers previously involved, but the projected increase in the next 16 months, totalling 2,700 craft and 22,000 personnel, required a centralised administration. The Admiralty was proposing that this be a function of the ACO. Mountbatten was willing to accept this, as long as provision was made for a small administrative staff. This staff would be under a retired rear admiral at the COHQ, to be known as the Rear Admiral Landing Craft and Bases (RALB). The assault shipping and their landing craft would come under a commodore known as the Senior Officer Assault Ships and Craft (SOASC). Mountbatten was also interested in establishing a much closer liaison with the Royal Marines,

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3. COS(41) 406 Mtg 3 Dec 41, CAB 79/16.

4. COS(41) 408 Mtg 4 Dec 41, CAB 79/16.

'the traditional combined operations force' and consequently requested that his Royal Marine advisor's billet be regraded from that of a major to a colonel. He also wanted to set up two teams of staff officers whom he could lend to force commanders, when appointed. Mountbatten also noted that Keyes had left a very small headquarters, and after the reorganisation outlined he would require<sup>5</sup> a net increase of 11 officers and a number of WRNS clerical staff.

The COS considered these proposals on 9 December 1941. Mountbatten's request for additional personnel was pared down by two or three officers, but the remainder of his reorganisation was approved. In order that his title might more clearly reflect his increased executive authority, the COS bent their previous resolution to the extent of allowing him two titles. 'Adviser on Combined Operations', ACO, would be used whenever acting in his advisory capacity to the COS, service department, or force commanders. When he was transmitting orders to the elements under his command he could use the title 'Commodore Combined Operations', CCO. A new directive, sub-<sup>6</sup>mitted by Mountbatten, was approved by the COS at the same time. This is reproduced in Appendix E.

In most respects this directive was similar to Mountbatten's previous one, apart from the fact that it codified the committees that had been, or were about to be, established. These were the Combined Operations Sub-Committee, the Combined Operations Air Committee, and the Combined Operations Signal Committee. The Combined Operations Sub-Committee was meant to deal in all matters

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5. COS(41) 711 (REVISE) 'Combined Operations Organisation' 4 Dec 41, CAB 80/32.

6. COS(41) 414 Mtg 9 Dec 41, CAB 79/16 and COS(41) 732 'Directive to ACO' 9 Dec 41, CAB 80/32.



of detail in respect to training, and was similar to that proposed by Keyes. Its superior, the Combined Operations Committee, established by the earlier October directive, would deal with matters of policy. The Air Committee had been established at Mountbatten's request, while the Communications Committee stemmed from the suggestion of the VCNS of 13 November 1941.<sup>7</sup> As Mountbatten's background had been in communications, this idea received his firm support. The major change was the inclusion of the responsibility for all ships - other than Merchant Navy- and craft in the United Kingdom that were allocated for combined operations. Keyes had direct command of shipping for raiding purposes only, with further craft coming under the CTCs, while Mountbatten's first directive had only given him command of the CTCs. The COHQ was now well on the way to running its own navy, and would do so until August 1943, when the Admiralty reassumed control. Policy for the allocation of the craft was to remain in the hands of the COS, though Mountbatten was to make recommendations.

Keyes had already complained on 30 October 1941 that Churchill had 'given to Mountbatten all that he had agreed to allow the COS to take away from me'.<sup>8</sup> Mountbatten's new authority was in many respects far more comprehensive than that claimed by Keyes. Mountbatten's personality had a great deal to do with this, but an even greater factor was the changed relationship of combined operations to the higher direction of the war. Major combined operations, due to American manpower and production capacity, were for the first time a feasible operation of war. The return to the Continent,

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7. COS(41) 678 'Communications in Future Combined Operations' 13 Nov 41, CAB 80/31.

8. Keyes to Ismay 30 Oct 41, DEFE 2/698.

possible only through a major combined operation, would take its place as a central pillar of grand strategy. Major strategic decisions from now on would be an Allied concern, rather than a purely British one. For all these reasons the COHQ would change markedly in nature and function, and would assume a greatly increased importance up to the Normandy landings. British combined operations, as encountered in the period from Dunkirk to Pearl Harbour, were at an end. Despite all the acrimonious disputes and the succession of aborted operations, despite the exclusion from strategic policy and the doubtfulness of much of its doctrine, the combined operations organisation had laid the foundation for that unique day in military history, the 6th of June 1944.



## CHAPTER XI

### CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC (1)

#### EIRE

The first contingency operation to be mounted after Dunkirk was directed at Eire. On 13 June 1940 Churchill sent a note to the COS on the possibility of a German invasion there, which resulted in the ISPS being directed to study the occupation of the Shannon River estuary, Queenstown Harbour, and Berehaven.<sup>1</sup> The Royal Marine Brigade had earlier been ordered to concentrate in the area of Milford Haven to continue its training, where it would be available for such operations. It was to be assembled and fully equipped by 21 June 1940, for employment in any of the areas mentioned.<sup>2</sup> In order to be able to mount the operation in the shortest possible time, the COS decided on 20 June 1940 that the required shipping should be assembled in Milford Haven, and the loading of heavy stores should start.<sup>3</sup> Churchill remained concerned about Eire, and reviewed the situation at a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting on 21 June 1940. The Royal Marine Brigade was intended to seize a bridgehead in Eire for the landing of a further division from the United Kingdom, although no division had as yet been earmarked for this role. Churchill apparently approved of the plans, and directed that a division be earmarked and concentrated in an area from which it could sail for Eire with as little delay as possible.<sup>4</sup>

On 24 June 1940 the COS agreed that the 3rd Division, at the

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1. COS(40) 179 Mtg 13 Jun 40, CAB 79/5 and JP(40) 5 (ISPS) 'Irish Ports' 18 Jun 40, CAB 84/93.

2. COS(40) 187 Mtg 20 Jun 40, CAB 79/5

3. COS(40) 188 Mtg 20 Jun 40, CAB 79/5

4. DO(40) 18 Mtg 21 Jun 40, CAB 69/1.

time the only fully equipped regular division in the United Kingdom, should be the one earmarked for Eire. The COS met with Morford later that day to discuss the readiness of the Royal Marine Brigade. Under the arrangements in force Morford estimated that it would take 24 to 36 hours for the brigade to sail. This was unacceptable to the COS, and they consequently directed that the whole brigade should be embarked immediately, so that the force had but to raise steam to be ready to leave. Phillips, now termed Vice Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS), pointed out that the Royal Marine Brigade was unsuited for extended land operations unless it was strongly reinforced by artillery and anti-aircraft weapons. Haining, now termed Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff (VCIGS), agreed in principle to this reinforcement, but deferred a decision pending an examination of the role of the brigade.<sup>5</sup>

The 3rd Division had by then been preparing two of its brigades for operations against the Portuguese Atlantic islands, and it thus momentarily found itself earmarked for two operations simultaneously. This was resolved at the COS meeting the following day, 25 June 1940. It was agreed that it would be faster and more efficient to move the 3rd Division to Northern Ireland at once, using that province as a 'bridgehead' rather than having the Royal Marine Brigade seize one. The Royal Marine Brigade was still to remain at Milford Haven, at 6 hours' notice to sail for the Shannon. As it probably would not be required for an assault landing, however, it might then be used, in place of the 3rd Division, for the operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes.<sup>6</sup> Churchill, when approached, would not consent to

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5. COS(40) 191 and 192 Mtgs 24 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.

6. COS(40) 194 Mtg 25 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.



the planned move of the 3rd Division to Northern Ireland, as it was still the Home Forces' main reserve. After further discussion with the COS, another division was sent in its place and the COS on 1 July 1940 agreed that the Royal Marine Brigade should be relieved of its responsibility for operations in Eire. It could then be reinforced with an army battalion, the 8th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and be used for the Atlantic Islands operations.<sup>7</sup> This change of role was formally confirmed on 4 July 1940.<sup>8</sup>

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7. COS(40) 203 Mtg 1 Jul 40, CAB 79/5.

8. COS(40) 208 Mtg 4 Jul 40, CAB 79/5.

## CHAPTER XII

### OPERATION MENACE - THE ATTACK ON DAKAR

The months immediately after Dunkirk, when Churchill was still settling in and the planning and combined operations organisations were in a state of flux, saw, rather ironically, the only execution of a combined operation from the United Kingdom during the whole period under consideration. This operation, termed MENACE, was the assault on Dakar. It has been well researched, and A.J. Marder, in his work Operation Menace, published in 1976, has given almost the definitive account of this operation. Action against Dakar had been considered early in July 1940, and the operation actually started with a submission to Churchill of a plan by General Charles de Gaulle. On 4 August 1940 Churchill decided to undertake the operation. This was in the early period of Churchill's tenure, when he was unconvinced of the ability of the service departments to produce quick and decisive offensive action. Just as in some of his early proposals to Keyes, he now disregarded the normal service planning process and simply directed the COS to prepare an operational plan. He considered this decision to be entirely political, and made it known that he did not want to see a lot of military objections being put up<sup>1</sup> by the COS.

The COS reluctantly approved the project, which was to go through a number of permutations. Churchill sent the COS a written directive on 8 August 1940 telling them, among other things, to use the Royal Marines then being held for operations against the Azores and Cape<sup>2</sup> Verdes. On 12 August 1940 Vice Admiral J.H.D. Cunningham and Major

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1. WP(40) 301 'Operation SCIPPIO' 4 Aug 40, CAB 66/10

2. COS(40) 254 Mtg 8 Aug 40, CAB 79/6



General N.M.S. Irwin were appointed as the naval and military commanders. Cunningham brought at least half his staff with him, but Irwin was not so fortunate. His GSO 1 was detached from the Royal Marine Brigade, but his six other staff officers were an ad hoc group assembled by the War Office. The new commanders first met the COS on 13 August 1941, and were instructed to approach the DCO for technical advice. The ISPS was to be responsible for the embarkation of the force.<sup>3</sup> The concept of the operation soon changed again, and the final directives for the commanders were not approved until 17 August 1940.<sup>4</sup>

The situation was reviewed by Churchill, the VCOS, and the commanders on 20 August 1940.<sup>5</sup> The operation would now entail the use of the 101st Royal Marine Brigade and the four Royal Marine battalions, one independent company, and ancillary troops, embarked in the transports Sobieski, Ettrick, Kenya, and Karanja. On 21 August 1940, as the commanders' detailed plans were being prepared for submission to the COS, Keyes met with Churchill, Eden, and the VCNS.<sup>6</sup> Keyes' frustration with the lack of offensive operations, and his exclusion from the planning system, had spurred him to seek a part of the responsibility for MENACE itself. The opening had been given to Keyes by a memorandum written by Haining, the VCIGS, on 17 August 1940, in which a postponement of MENACE had been suggested. This was written at the same time that Cunningham had presented some naval arguments for a delay until October 1940.

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3. COS(40) 262 Mtg 13 Aug 40, CAB 79/6

4. COS(40) 267 Mtg 16 Aug 40, CAB 79/6 and COS(40) 639 'Operation MENACE' 17 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.

5. COS(40) 274 Mtg 20 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.

6. Churchill to Ismay 22 Aug 49, PREM 3/276.

Haining had explained that the Royal Marines had been discovered to be 'completely untrained' in their special role, and so were being sent to Scapa Flow on 22 August 1940 for a crash course in boat work. More training for this complicated operation was plainly desirable, and the commanders considered a postponement of two weeks for this would be acceptable, if the month that Cunningham had asked for was not granted. Even then conditions would not be ideal.<sup>7</sup> After some discussion on this request Churchill 'came to the conclusion that the operation MENACE had best be entrusted to a smaller number of more highly trained mobile troops than is now proposed'. He was now convinced that the Royal Marine battalions could not be considered as trained troops for the purposes of MENACE, consisting as they did 'almost entirely of new recruits brought in since the beginning of the war, and whose training could probably not compete with many battalions of the regular army'. Keyes had offered to furnish, in 3 days, 1,500 men from the commandos and independent companies to conduct the assault phase of MENACE, with one regular army and one Royal Marine battalion in reserve. Churchill at once sent off a message to the COS explaining this change and asking for the new schedule of dates for the operation that would result.

This thunderbolt was taken up the following morning by the VCOS and the joint commanders. The situation was viewed by them as far different than the optimistic one espoused by Keyes. No. 10 Independent Company, already being employed for MENACE, was the only one fully mobilised and equipped. Of the other companies, one would be ready by 28 August 1940, two were probably fit for

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7. COS(40) 641 'Operation MENACE' 17 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.



operations but not mobilised, three were partly trained but not mobilised, and three were definitely not ready for operations. None of these companies had had any training with landing craft. The VCNS considered it 'unlikely that their training compared favourably with the Royal Marines who had the advantage of a very high proportion of regular officers and NCOs'.. None of the comandos had been mobilised. This estimate of the relative readiness of the differing units was fairly accurate from the War Office point of view, but the case for the Royal Marines had probably been stretched a bit. In any event the transports were by then all loaded, and if the composition of the force were altered the restowing of the ships would delay the operation a further four or five days.

The VCOS explained this to Churchill, who then turned to Keyes for an opinion. Keyes now increased his estimate to '2,350 first-class men led by excellent officers spoiling to fight', including 600 Royal Marines. He admitted that only 850 men had so far been properly equipped, but thought that, if the War Office would 'play up', this could be corrected in 48 hours, as opposed to the War Office estimate of a fortnight. 'If the enterprise is confided to us we will get on with it full blast - if I have the responsibility - you may be certain that it will be planned to the last detail - and you will not hear anything about difficulties, hazards, and potential dangers'. Churchill then held another conference with the VCOS, but faced with their arguments he relented and agreed to

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8. COS(40) 277 Mtg 22 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.

9. Keyes to Churchill 22 Aug 40, K 140/3/1.

adhere to the original arrangements.

Angered at this, Keyes wrote to Churchill on 24 August 1940, asking him if he was going to 'risk failure at Dakar' and comparing the hawering over MENACE in some respects to the hesitancy of the operation at Oran.<sup>11</sup> The opportunity for further protest had passed, however, as the preparations for MENACE were by then in an advanced stage. Their participation in MENACE being over, Keyes and his staff were now free to move from their Admiralty offices to the new accommodation at Richmond Terrace.

Some of the deficiencies in the planning for MENACE came to light before the expedition sailed. Considerable confusion had arisen in the loading of the shipping. The movements control at Liverpool had been under the impression that the ships were being loaded for a simple troop and stores movement. No preparations had been made for the large amount of mobilisation stores the troops brought with them, and Irwin himself admitted that no one had the least idea of what was actually stowed on each ship. On 24 August 1940 one of the DCO's staff reported on an inspection trip to the port of embarkation, during which he had helped to straighten out the confusion as much as he could. The Ettrick was cited as an example. She was reported as being loaded to capacity although MT, stores, and four tons of ammunition allocated to her had been left over. The loading had been in any order, with no loading plan being kept, and the ship was unlikely, as loaded, to prove seaworthy in heavy weather. Keyes forwarded this report the same day as evidence

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10. Ismay to Seal 22 Aug 40, PREM 3/276.

11. Keyes to Churchill 24 Aug 40, K 140/3/1.



'that the present organisation is not satisfactory', in support of a proposal to establish, either in the COHQ or ISPS, a sub-section responsible for planning and supervising the loading of ships for combined operations. He asked, if he were to be responsible, for the addition of one military and one naval officer to his staff for

<sup>12</sup>  
this duty. The COS saw Bourne about this on 26 August 1940.

Ready agreement was reached on the need for such a sub-section, and as Keyes already had a qualified officer the responsibility was assigned to him. No augmentation to his staff was granted, however, and so the personnel would have to be provided from his existing

<sup>13</sup>  
resources. This irked Keyes, and he argued that, as the responsibility was his, the decision on what staff was necessary was surely his concern. The COS decided on 6 September 1940 to uphold their previous

<sup>14</sup>  
decision. When it was later decided, after MENACE, to restow the ships at Freetown, the COHQ had to fly out an officer, who remained absent for a considerable period. Keyes was not at all happy with the situation, particularly in the light of the readily-accorded JPS expansion. He 'returned to the charge', and eventually the War

<sup>15</sup>  
Office did appoint an additional officer for this duty. It is seemingly a minor affair, but these minor affairs, when added together, did nothing to ease his relations with the service departments.

MENACE proved a failure, the force returning to its staging area  
<sup>16</sup>  
at Freetown, Sierra Leone, on 27 September 1940. Churchill and the

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12. COS(40) 662 'Operation MENACE' 24 Aug 40, CAB 80/17; Marder, p. 52; Irwin's Report 7 Oct 40, DEFE 2/174.

13. COS(40) 280 Mtg 26 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.

14. COS(40) 297 Mtg 6 Sep 40, CAB 79/6.

15. Notes on DCO Paper 26 Aug 40, K 13/1.

16. For details of the operation, see A.J. Marder, Operation Menace (London 1976)

COS decided on 28 September 1940 that the British component should be landed in West Africa and temporarily placed under the command of the GOC there.<sup>17</sup> Plans were afoot for the reconstitution of the operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes, and the forces involved had to be kept together as much as possible.

Irwin submitted an after-action report on 7 October 1940, covering at length the initiation, organisation, sailing, and assault phases of the operation and adding his own comments and conclusions. The report pointed out some of the fundamental problems. The command and control arrangements had not been adequate. Irwin recommended that a special headquarters ship be used for combined operations, an idea later developed. This would also improve the communications arrangements, which for MENACE had been ad hoc and totally unsatisfactory. The commanders had also been hindered by the fact that no staff existed for planning, and one had to be assembled indiscriminately even as the preparations for mounting the operation were in progress. The plans, in the main, had thus to be taken over from people who had no responsibility for carrying them out, a process 'always unsatisfactory'.

There were other deficiencies in the planning process. There was a lack of a clear directive early in the process, and the continuous changes in concept had seriously delayed the preparation of detailed plans. The security had been weak. Perhaps the most telling factor, Irwin thought, was the insufficient, and inaccurate, intelligence upon which the planning was based. There were unverified political assumptions, and, from the purely military point of

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17. COS(40) 9 Mtg (0) and annexed telegrams 25 Sep 40, CAB 79/55.



view, Irwin thought 'the absence of good information about a place in which we had service officers for eight or nine months requires little but adverse comment'. This was an intelligence system which the COS, in reply to Keyes' criticism in August, thought sound and efficient. Irwin closed his report with the recommendation, in the light of his experience with the current planning system, in strong terms 'that the office of the Director of Combined Operations should be itself or should contain the permanent nucleus of a combined operations headquarters'. This was almost exactly what Keyes had proposed earlier, and must have certainly raised a few eyebrows in the service departments, but the report as a whole was soon shelved. 18

A few follow-up operations to MENACE had been considered. Though none of them came to pass there were a few important points about how they were handled. On 31 August 1940 Churchill had told Keyes, directly, to prepare a coup de main to land French troops in Casablanca. It is difficult to say whether this request was in compensation for the denial of Keyes' request to conduct MENACE, but in both of these cases the manner of initiating the operation, the geographic area, and the scope envisaged, clearly were outside the bounds of the directive he had inherited from Bourne. This must have given added support to Keyes' contentions about the status of his appointment. The JPS was at the same time working on an operation in French Morocco, termed THREAT. Keyes was prepared to await the JPS report on THREAT before he went into the Casablanca operation in detail, but he did tell Churchill on 6 September 1940 that the operation was feasible 'under a resolute commander', and there can be

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18. Irwin's report on MENACE 7 Oct 40, DEFE 2/174. A good account of the MENACE operation can be found in HIST. (A)1. (Revise) 'The Dakar Operation' 5 Feb 41, PREM 3/276.

little doubt about who he thought this commander should be,

Nothing was to come of THREAT, for on 21 September 1940 the COS agreed that priority should be given to the Portuguese Atlantic islands.



CHAPTER XIIICONTINGENCY OPERATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC (2)AZORES AND CAPE VERDES

Contingency operations in the Atlantic were to tie up virtually the entire amphibious capability of the United Kingdom throughout the period studied. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, at a War Cabinet meeting on 15 May 1940, had expressed some concern that if Italy came into the war and Spain, assisted by the Germans, became hostile, Portugal might also be forced to turn against the British. He therefore thought that some consideration should be given to holding a striking force ready to secure, in the latter event, strategic points in the Azores and Cape Verdes Islands, and possibly on the Portuguese mainland as well. The Cabinet thereupon requested the COS to determine what action could usefully be taken to<sup>1</sup> accomplish this. On 31 May 1940 the subject was brought up once again. Halifax hoped that a situation requiring action was 'remote', but thought that plans should be prepared. Further action was sus-<sup>2</sup>pended until the COS conducted a detailed operational examination.

The steadily worsening situation in France resulted in the Directors of Plans of the three services widening the scope of this examination. On 8 June 1940 they instructed the Inter-Service Planning Staff (ISPS), a committee of junior officers responsible for the executive arrangements of operations, to investigate, in order of priority, cooperation with the French to assist the Spanish in defending the Balearic Islands from Italian attack, the

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1. WM(40) 123 Mtg 15 May 40, CAB 65/7.

2. WM(40) 149 Mtg 31 May 40, CAB 65/7.

denial of the use of the Canaries Islands to the enemy if Spain were hostile, and the seizure of the Azores and Cape Verdes if Portugal were hostile.<sup>3</sup> The ISPS report on these operations was approved by the JPSC on 14 June 1940. The Balearics were written off. If Italy entered the war they would be a French responsibility; if Spain turned hostile there was nothing that could be done about them by either the French or British. Attention was thus concentrated on the Atlantic islands. With Spain and Portugal 'genuinely' neutral, and with effective British control of the Straits of Gibraltar, the JPSC thought it unlikely that the enemy would attempt to establish air and naval bases on the islands. They therefore recommended that no action be taken against the islands 'unless our enemies attempt to occupy them or are evidently about to make the attempt'.

The islands were then considered individually. The Canaries had a harbour at La Luz and an airfield at Gando on the Gran Canary, a harbour at Santa Cruz, and a landing ground on Teneriffe. Denial of these facilities to the enemy was not 'of outstanding importance' in view of the existence of further air and naval facilities on the Spanish territory on the adjacent mainland, and because trade could be routed westward far enough to avoid the danger. The British would need the facilities only if they could not use Gibraltar. At that time they still hoped that in this event they could use Casablanca instead. The Canaries were therefore not critical, though if Casablanca was not available, they would assume a greater importance as the nearest alternative to Gibraltar. In any case, the minimum forces considered necessary to capture and hold the islands were 2 infantry brigades reinforced with 2 anti-aircraft

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3. JP(40) 54 Mtg 8 Jun 40, CAB 84/2 and JP(40) 2 (ISPS) 'Western Mediterranean and Atlantic Projects' 8 Jun 40, CAB 84/93.



regiments and a fighter squadron. Both fighters and anti-aircraft guns were in critically short supply, and it was questionable whether even those listed were enough to defend the islands against large scale air attacks from the mainland. As the islands were 'not vital' and the forces required for an operation were not commensurate with the advantages to be gained, the JPSC recommended no action against the Canaries.

The Azores and Cape Verdes were a different case. The Azores had a harbour at Horta on Fayal, a harbour at Ponta Delgada on San Miguel, and possible landing grounds on Terceira. Madeira with a cable station at Funchal was also listed. The Cape Verdes had an airfield on Sal, a harbour at St. Vincent, and landing grounds on some of the other islands. If the enemy occupied all these islands the British would be forced into the intolerable situation of routing the Cape of Good Hope trade almost to the West Indies. The use of all these islands would thus have to be denied to the enemy. In addition, the Azores would provide a valuable fuelling base if Gibraltar were unusable. The JPSC estimated that an infantry brigade would be required for each of two groups of islands. Air reconnaissance units would also be needed in each of the groups after capture. Action against Madeira was unnecessary. If Portugal were hostile it was clear that the islands would have to be occupied. If Spain only were hostile the situation would be delicate. If the British tried to forestall the enemy by seizing the Azores and Cape Verdes while Portugal was still neutral, it might lead to Spain taking action against the Portuguese mainland. Nevertheless, the JPSC felt that 'the time is past when we can afford to allow our policy to be dictated by these considerations'. They therefore

recommended that, if there was 'clear evidence' that Spain would enter the war, or that the Azores and Cape Verdes might be seized by the enemy, the islands should be occupied. In order to be in a position to undertake this operation they further recommended that the troops required be earmarked and withdrawn from any other role, that the shipping necessary be earmarked, and that the naval and military commanders be appointed immediately to work out the detailed plans.<sup>4</sup>

The COS considered this report on 15 and 17 June 1940. The COS agreed with the policies and measures contained in the JPSC report with one exception. The use of French ports in Africa was now improbable, and if Gibraltar were to become unusable other alternatives would be necessary. The harbours in the Azores and Madeira were not satisfactory substitutes for Gibraltar, and the COS looked at the Canaries. They were not fully convinced of the JPSC estimate of the forces required to seize and hold the Canaries, and directed the JPSC to re-examine the matter. As the forces likely to be available for any operations against the Atlantic islands would be limited, they also directed the JPSC to produce a recommendation as to the priority to be accorded to the various island groups. The Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee (JISC), the intelligence equivalent of the JPSC, was in the meanwhile to look into 'fifth column' activities to assist in the occupation of the islands.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the 17 June 1940 meeting the 3rd Division, under Major General B.L. Montgomery, was tasked to prepare for operations

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4. COS(40) 465 (JP) 'Western Mediterranean and Atlantic Islands Projects' 14 Jun 40, CAB 80/13.

5. COS(40) 184 Mtg 17 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.



against the Azores and Cape Verdes. The division was then assisting in the defence of the south coast. As Montgomery stated in his memoirs:

The planners were now getting busy in Whitehall and various schemes were being considered. When it came to deciding which troops would carry out these wild-cat schemes, the answer was always the same; it must be the 3rd Division since there was no other formation yet ready for active operations.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever Montgomery thought of the Atlantic islands operations, he nevertheless produced outline plans for their capture by 23 June 1940. The assault of the Azores, Operation Number 1, would require one infantry brigade with support, including one Commando. The assault of the Cape Verdes, Operation Number 2, would need an infantry brigade with one Independent Company attached.<sup>7</sup>

The ISPS had been re-examining the Canaries project and their report was amended and submitted by the JPSC on 20 June 1940. Rather than following the COS' line that the Spanish defence might not be very stubborn, the planners had in fact increased their estimate of the amount of opposition anticipated. They now declared that a complete infantry division would be necessary to seize the Canaries. After capture they felt that the garrison needed to hold the islands could be reduced to an infantry brigade group, but it would now include a bomber as well as a fighter squadron. The ISPS and JPSC, contrary to the COS and the Defence Committee of the War Cabinet, were at this time consistently downgrading the importance of the Canaries, which should be remembered when operational planning in 1941 is considered. The JPSC did not consider the Canaries an alternative to Gibraltar. The exit from the Mediterranean could not be adequately controlled from the Canaries, which were 640 miles

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6. Viscount Montgomery, The Memoirs of Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein KG (London 1958), pp. 67-70.

7. For copies of the operations order see WO 106/2933.

from the Straits, and 'under these conditions, the possession of a base in the Canaries is not a requirement of the highest importance'. The defences required to secure the Canaries would be 'an expensive and increasing commitment' of the resources that could be better used elsewhere. The JPSC therefore reaffirmed their recommendation of 14 June 1940 that no action be taken against the Canaries, and that priority should be given to the Azores and Cape Verdes.<sup>8</sup>

The COS considered this on 20 June 1940. Admiral Sir A. Dudley Pound, the CNS, told the committee that the Naval Staff were at work on plans for routing trade, and suggested that the question be taken up when these plans had been completed.<sup>9</sup> On 21 June 1940 the general question of bases in the North Atlantic was brought up in a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting. The Azores and Cape Verdes were covered, but attention was again centered upon the Canaries as an alternative to Gibraltar. Use of Casablanca and Oran was still suggested, 'whether or not the French co-operated'. Casablanca's harbour was declared unsuitable, but Oran was a possibility. Churchill emphasised that detailed plans must be worked out immediately by commanders appointed for all the operations. 'Surprise and boldness of action were essential.' No delay should be incurred in getting the troops trained and prepared for embarkation at short notice, irrespective of whichever operation was ultimately undertaken. The COS were tasked to examine for the third time the seizure of the Canaries, as well as looking into operations against Oran.<sup>10</sup>

The COS and VCOS met to consider these instructions on 22 June 1940, and expressed their views to Churchill on 24 June 1940. Casa-

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8. COS(40) 474 (JP) 'Atlantic Islands Projects' 20 Jun 40, CAB 80/13.

9. COS(40) 188 Mtg 20 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.

10. DO(40) 18 Mtg 21 Jun 40, CAB 69/1.



blanca and Oran were now both discarded as alternatives to Gibraltar because of their indifferent harbour facilities, their vulnerability to air attack, and the disproportionate forces necessary for their defence. The past studies on the Canaries had indicated that at least a division would be required, and with this in mind it was 'clear that there can be no question of undertaking the operation in the immediate future'. The JPSC were in the meanwhile working on a detailed appreciation of the Canaries operation, so that a 'final decision' could be made as to its feasibility when troops, equipment,<sup>11</sup> and air forces could be made available.

The JPSC completed their appreciation on 28 June 1940. It was more or less a repetition of their earlier studies, with the added argument that successful control of trade at the source in the Americas would further reduce the need to secure the Canaries. In this case, in view of the heavy commitment which the operation would involve, the JPSC did not 'consider that the capture and retention of these islands would be justified'. Even if the control at source proved ineffective, the existing threat to the United Kingdom and the shortage of trained troops and equipment of all kinds would preclude the seizure of the Canaries in the immediate future. The JPSC thought, however, that the operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes were essential, and they recommended that forces be made available for these operations to replace the 3rd Division, which was<sup>12</sup> being withdrawn for other duties. On 1 July 1940 the COS endorsed the JPSC report, and confirmed a tentative decision that the Royal

11. COS(40) 190 Mtg 22 Jun 40 and COS(40) 192 Mtg 24 Jun 40, CAB 79/5; COS(40) 486 'Atlantic Islands' 24 Jun 40, CAB 80/13.

12. COS(40) 501 (JP) 'Atlantic Islands Projects' 28 Jun 40, CAB 80/14. 'Control of Trade at Source' referred to the indirect system of blockade used to influence exporting countries.

Marine Brigade could be used for operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes.<sup>13</sup> This was not a 'final decision' on the feasibility of the Canaries operations, as intended earlier, but it did result in the question being shelved for some time.

The COHQ, recently established, was to assume a role in the operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes. The Royal Marine Brigade was ready for these operations on 16 July 1940, when the directives prepared by the JPSC were issued to the military commanders. The chief naval staff officers received their directives on 18 July 1940, as the naval commanders themselves would not be appointed until the operation was initiated.<sup>14</sup> The Admiralty issued detailed instructions to all concerned on 20 July 1940. The basic assumption in these instructions was that the operations would probably be ordered without the British being at war with Portugal. It was hoped that, unless the enemy had succeeded in establishing himself in the islands first, the local authorities would submit to occupation by British forces upon a demand backed by force majeure. The Royal Marine Brigade had been split into two for the operations. The 1st Royal Marine Brigade, under Brigadier A.C. St. Clair-Morford and consisting of the 1st and 5th Battalions, Royal Marines, and the 8th Battalion: Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, would occupy the Azores in Operation ACCORDIAN. Naval support for this force would consist of 2 battle-ships or cruisers and 4 to 6 destroyers. The force would seize simultaneously the islands of Fayal, with its harbour at Ponta Delgada, and San Miguel, with its harbour at Horta. The island of

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13. COS(40) 203 Mtg 1 Jul 40, CAB 79/5.

14. COS(40)227 Mtg 18 Jul 40, CAB 79/5. Final Directives are annexed to COS(40) 551 (REVISE) 'Atlantic Islands Projects' 24 Jul 40, CAB 80/15.



Terceira, where potential aircraft landing grounds existed, was to be subsequently occupied. Although it was hoped that there would be no resistance, the commanders were instructed to plan for an opposed landing over the beaches. The force would be transported in the merchant liners Sobieski and Karanja and, considering the number of ALC available, would be landed mainly in ships' boats. A storeship and an oiler would also accompany the force. The 2nd Royal Marine Brigade, under Brigadier R.H. Campbell and consisting of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, Royal Marines, would occupy the Cape Verdes in Operation SACKBUTT. The naval forces would consist of 1 cruiser and 4 to 6 destroyers. The initial objectives were the islands of St. Vincent, with its harbour at Porto Grande, and Sal, where an Italian-operated airfield existed. The islands of St. Jago and Mayo, where there were potential aircraft landing grounds, could be subsequently occupied. The force would be transported in the merchant liners Kenya and either Strathmore or Athlone Castle, with the landing arrangements being similar to those in ACCORDIAN. A store ship and an oiler would also be present with this force. The command arrangements for both ACCORDIAN and SACKBUTT were specified as those of joint command by the military and naval commanders.

It was intended that both operations would take place simultaneously in order to achieve maximum surprise. Because of the greater distance to the Cape Verdes this resulted in a complex movement schedule susceptible to delay. If such a delay occurred in any of the component convoys, as a result of either mechanical difficulties, weather, or enemy action, the Admiralty would give further instructions. The forces would be at 48 hours' notice to

sail from the time the War Cabinet decided to launch the operations,  
 and the landings would commence 10 days after sailing.<sup>15</sup> As surprise was essential, the paramount need for secrecy was stressed, a requirement the COHQ found somewhat incongruous given the very lengthy distribution list of the Admiralty instructions. Keyes thought that the instructions themselves, mentioning as they did both the code names and the actual place names, constituted a security violation. The Admiralty did not agree, and Keyes took the matter to the ISSB. The Admiralty was overruled, and so on 27 July 1940 the code names ACCORDIAN and SACKBUTT were changed to ALLOY and SHRAPNEL respectively.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout July 1940 some of the more obscure points of the plans were clarified. The contradiction of the concept of Portuguese acquiescence to a demand backed by force majeure with the requirement for surprise in the assault was pointed out to the JPSC by the commanders. The decision was therefore made to concentrate on the initial attempt to secure key points against possible opposition by using surprise, after which action could be taken in conjunction with the Portuguese authorities to limit further resistance. The rewording of the directives to incorporate this concept was approved by the COS on 22 July 1940.<sup>17</sup> A report on the operations, along with the directives, was then submitted to the War Cabinet for covering approval of the preparations that had been made and for the acceptance in principle of the COS recommendations as to the conditions under which the operations should be launched. The fact was stressed

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15. 'Instructions for Operations ACCORDIAN and SACKBUTT' 20 Jul 40, DEFE 2/64.

16. Notes on 21 and 27 Jul 40, DEFE 2/116.

17. JP(40) 74 Mtg 21 Jul 40, CAB 84/2; COS(40) 229 Mtg 22 Jul 40, CAB 79/5; and COS(40) 563 (JP) 'Atlantic Islands Projects' 21 Jul 40, CAB 80/15.



that nothing would be done to initiate the operations without an  
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 express decision by the War Cabinet.

This was the first that the War Cabinet had seen of the projects since 31 May 1940, when it had been considering the seemingly remote possibility of Portuguese hostility. The COS now recommended that the Portuguese Atlantic islands be seized in the event of either Spanish or Portuguese hostility, if it became clear 'beyond a reasonable doubt' that either country intended to intervene in the war, or if the exercise of economic pressure upon Germany and the occupied countries by the control of material at source or by the control of shipping failed to achieve adequate results, and reliance had to be placed upon more direct naval action. Halifax pointed out that the British might soon be faced with hostilities with Vichy, in which case the third condition listed would not result in advantages sufficient to incur the risk of hostilities with either Spain or Portugal as well. Churchill was not personally convinced that the seizure of the islands would necessarily mean war with Portugal, as the government might conceivably accept the fait accompli under protest. Much of Churchill's rather confident attitude could be traced to his grave concern that Gibraltar might be rendered unusable. His views were supported by the COS, who felt that although the Portuguese could not be expected to bear an attack on the islands without resentment, particularly in view of the British inability to assist in the protection of Portugal against a resultant attack by Germany, the operations would be condoned by the Dominions and by the rest of the world, and might even be understood by Salazar, the Portuguese

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18. WP(40) 265/COS(40) 551 (REVISE) 'Atlantic Islands Projects'  
 24 Jul 40, CAB 80/15.

President. In the end all the preparations were approved, as well as the first two conditions under which the operation would be launched.<sup>19</sup>

The COHQ was at the time playing a substantial role in the preparations for these operations, both in regard to direct planning and as a liaison between the force commanders and the JPSC. On 24 July 1940 Keyes and some of his staff attended a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting during which Churchill questioned the object of the operations. The readiness of the forces was discussed, although it was pointed out that so long as it was possible to use Gibraltar, and until the flying boats intended to be based in the Azores were ready, it would be unwise to precipitate a crisis by action against the islands. Churchill was still mainly concerned with the threat to Gibraltar itself, and the possible effect of a 'treacherous attack' upon fleet units in the harbour there.<sup>20</sup>

This concern over the possibility of a surprise attack on Gibraltar, and the countermeasures that could be employed, became one of Churchill's preoccupations. Mulling over the ideas presented at the meeting, he wrote to the Foreign Secretary later that day.

All my reflections about the danger of our ships lying under Spanish howitzers in Gibraltar leads me continually to the Azores. Must we always wait until a disaster has occurred? I do not think it follows that our occupation

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19. WM(40) 249 Mtg, Confidential Annex 22 Jul 40, CAB 65/14. For the diplomatic background in the Iberian Peninsula, see Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Vol. I (London 1970), pp. 433-452, and Sir Samuel Hoare, Ambassador on Special Mission (London 1956)

20. DO(40) 22 Mtg 24 Jul 40, CAB 69/1.



temporarily, and to forestall the enemy, of the Azores would necessarily precipitate German intervention... Moreover, once we have an alternative base to Gibraltar, how much do we care whether the Peninsula is overrun or not?... I am increasingly attracted by the idea of simply taking the Azores one fine morning out of the blue, and explaining everything to Portugal afterwards. She would certainly have every right to protest.<sup>21</sup>

Halifax replied on 31 July 1940 that, while he was 'impressed' by the force of Churchill's arguments, he nevertheless recommended caution. The situation in Spain had seemed to ease somewhat in the past few days, and he thought the British could afford to wait before action was required.<sup>22</sup> By this time Churchill's attention had turned to the attack on Dakar, and the pressure for ALLOY and SHRAPNEL was temporarily reduced.

The Directors of Plans and the force commanders saw the COS on 26 July 1940 to discuss the operation. There was no representative of the COHQ present, and from this time on the decline in its importance in the planning of ALLOY and SHRAPNEL became more and more noticable. A number of points were brought up at this meeting, among which was the problem of a simultaneous assault. As the force for the Cape Verdes sailed 6 days before that for the Azores, and there was a possibility of a delay to either, the question was asked whether in this event the original timetable should be adhered to as closely as possible, or the assault should be postponed to allow for coordinated action. The desirability of a simultaneous assault was affirmed, and in the event of major delays the commanders

21. Churchill to Halifax 24 Jul 40, PREM 3/361/1. This general desire for offensive operations somewhere was also reflected in his request to Keyes the following day for proposals for a number of medium sized raids.

22. Halifax to Churchill 31 Jul 40, PREM 3/361/1.

were authorised to break radio silence to ask for instructions. It was next suggested that if the consuls in the islands, who were retired naval officers, were found to be trustworthy they might be able to render some assistance to the landing forces, even if given only 48 hours notice, as in the case of the occupation of Iceland. A number of items of equipment for the ancillary units had not been received, and the training of some of these units was still not complete. Parts of their mobilisation equipment were being sent to the units in their present locations, and part should have already been loaded into the ships at the port of embarkation. The force commanders declared that they could not be responsible for ensuring that the stores in the shipping were complete, but they had notified the War Office of the order in which the stores should have been loaded and were 'content' to leave the matter in War Office hands. The question of Portuguese resistance was again raised, this time in the form of a request for instruction about the return of fire from Portuguese ships and shore batteries. The conditions were seen by the COS to be analagous to those that might have been encountered during the earlier projected operations in Scandinavian waters, and the instructions given then would be of equal value in this case. The fire would be returned only 'if it was endangering the safety of the transports before the troops disembarked, or is causing a number of casualties in a transport'.<sup>23</sup>

Planning was now influenced by the increasing probability of MENACE. Churchill had told the COS on 8 August 1940 to consider

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23. COS(40) 234 Mtg 26 Jul 40, CAB 79/5.



the Royal Marines available for operations against Dakar. In the plan for MENACE approved by the COS on 9 August 1940, the need for highly trained and specially equipped troops was accepted, and the obvious conclusion was that, of all the troops considered, the Royal Marines, who were in the process of acquiring all the available landing craft, would have to be those used. Although planning for MENACE continued, it was not until 13 August 1940 that some doubts were raised in regard to the temporary abandonment of ALLOY and

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SHRAPNEL. The ISPS were accordingly instructed to report, 'as a matter of urgency', on the possibility of reconstituting a force for ALLOY and SHRAPNEL, and the delay that might be encountered in doing

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so. The ISPS considered that it might be possible to reconstitute a force for the operations, but that this would entail the withdrawal of two scarce fully trained and equipped brigades from home defence duties. Counting time for training, the expedition could be ready to sail in about three weeks, i.e., by mid-September. The liners that would be needed for the expedition were in short supply. As it would be undesirable to withhold them from trooping, with a consequent loss of 7,000 to 12,000 troops from the approved reinforcement programme for the Middle East, the time required to take them from trade after the decision was made to launch the expedition might be as much as a fortnight. The only ALC available, necessary if beach landings were to be made, had already been committed to MENACE, and replacements would not be available until mid-October. By this time weather conditions in the North Atlantic might well make it impossible to carry out

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24. COS(40) 268 (JP) 'Operations in West Africa' 13 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.

25. COS(40) 265 Mtg 15 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.

beach landings no matter what equipment was used. It was noted that the original ALLOY and SHRAPNEL plans had been based only on summer conditions. This rather remarkable statement well indicates the initial expectations that the operations would be conducted shortly after they were mounted. Nevertheless, it serves as a reasonably valid indictment of faulty planning, as no alternative schemes had been considered. Although this problem was recognised in August, it was not until late September that any alternative plan was developed, and credit for this must rest with the COHQ rather than the planning staffs.

The ISPS concluded their report with the statement that ALLOY and SHRAPNEL could not be conducted until October 1940. Regular troops could be withdrawn from other tasks if necessary, but this was not an immediate requirement. The shipping shortage would keep the expedition at 14 days notice, resulting in a total time of at least 24 days from the decision to launch the expedition until the assault took place.<sup>26</sup> While this admittedly answered the COS' immediate question on the reconstitution of the force, the number of problems left unresolved is striking. There was no consideration of an alternative plan for the winter weather, nor indeed any evaluation of the underlying concept of the operations, i.e., the probability of only light resistance. In the circumstances in which the operations would be necessary, when the 24 day period to the assault was considered, this basic assumption was hardly likely to be valid. Neither was any mention made of the possibility of reconstituting the force from the MENACE expedition, a quicker method than the plan given, and the one

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26. COS(40) 640 'Operations ALLOY and SHRAPNEL' 17 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.



which was eventually adopted. The COS saw the inter-relationship of the operations more clearly, and when considering the report, on 20 August 1940, noted that any operations against the Portuguese Atlantic islands could not take place until MENACE had been resolved. <sup>27</sup>

With a temporary cancellation of MENACE on 15 September 1940, the JPS produced a report on the remounting of ALLOY and SHRAPNEL using the forces diverted for MENACE. It seemed best to leave the forces, initially, at Freetown, though force ALLOY would eventually have to be brought back to the United Kingdom owing to the lack of accommodation on shore there. Until de Gaulle's situation had been clarified Irwin's staff and the independent company would also remain there. In the meanwhile the ancillary units of the forces should be reconstituted in the United Kingdom, and the 2nd Royal Marine Brigade headquarters and the 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders <sup>28</sup> should be sent out to Freetown.

On the reinstatement of MENACE, on 17 September 1940, the COS directed that the preparations in the United Kingdom should be continued, though they intended to await developments at Dakar before letting the Argylls sail in the Pulaski. This would also give some time to find a replacement storeship for ALLOY, as the original one <sup>29</sup> had been sunk on 16 August 1940. After the outcome of MENACE was known steps were taken to reconstitute the forces for these operations. Brigadier Campbell and his brigade major, along with the designated

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27. COS(40) 274 Mtg 20 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.

28. COS(40) 753 (JP) 'Reconstitution of Operations ALLOY and SHRAPNEL' 16 Sep 40, CAB 80/19.

29. COS(40) 314 Mtg 17 Sep 40, CAB 79/6.

naval commander for SHRAPNEL, Captain Waller, with a representative of the DCO, were flown out to Freetown as quickly as possible. The remainder of the staff and signals section of 102nd Royal Marine Brigade, as 2nd Royal Marine Brigade was now designated, were sent to Freetown by armed merchant cruiser. The Argylls would remain in the United Kingdom at 48 hours notice, ready to link up with the 101st Royal Marine Brigade, as 1st Royal Marine Brigade was now designated, at sea if the decision were made to launch ALLOY.<sup>30</sup> No mention had as yet been made of the changes in the basic assumptions of the plans, particularly regarding the weather. The new conditions were first brought up at a meeting of the JPS on 26 September 1940, and the EPS was accordingly instructed to initiate exploratory studies<sup>31</sup> of the new tactical problem for referral to the commanders.

The COHQ, involved in the earlier planning for ALLOY and SHRAPNEL, had independently put some thought into the problem of winter conditions. Keyes produced a plan that would enable ALLOY to be conducted by the Commandos, which would give these units a boost in morale and would, in his view, involve the COHQ in its execution. On 28 September 1940 the COS discussed ALLOY with the Directors of Plans and Hornby. Gen.G.J. Giffard, GOC West Africa, had been instructed to temporarily concentrate the ALLOY forces at Freetown and the SHRAPNEL forces at Takoradi. The shipping for these operations was to be restowed at Freetown. Although not the best course of action as far as security was concerned, this had the advantage of speed. The COS then examined the modification to ALLOY developed by Keyes, and it was agreed that the JPS should go

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30. COS(40) 10 Mtg (0) 26 Sep 40, CAB 79/55 and COS(40) 8 (0) (JP)  
'Operations ALLOY and SHRAPNEL' 25 Sep 40, CAB 80/106.

31. JP(40) 100 Mtg 26 Sep 40, CAB 84/2.



into it in further detail.

During this latter investigation the apparent reluctance to accept the new proposal was overcome by the long and detailed explanation of why the original plan for ALLOY could not be considered valid. The recent action at Dakar had made it imperative that any future operations were assured of success. This requirement was affected by the dangers in the ALLOY plan that the enemy might get there first, by the degree of opposition that might be encountered from the Portuguese, and by the risks attendant in attempting to land the troops in uncertain weather conditions. A naval patrol had been instituted earlier to prevent enemy landings in the islands, but had since been cancelled due to many other commitments. As the Germans were likely to include the occupation of the Azores coincidentally with, or even prior to, hostilities in Spain or Portugal, temporary naval patrols sent to intercept any invading forces would be heavily dependent upon prior information, which was not likely to be available. Reliance could not thus be placed on forestalling the enemy. This in turn would affect the opposition likely to be encountered by the British upon landing. The original plan had envisaged the lowering of landing craft outside the area of the coast defences and an assault on the beaches in the harbours of Fayal and Horta. No other beaches were considered practicable. As a result of the prevailing swell from October through December the beach landings also could no longer be relied upon. If conditions were unfavourable the ships could stand off the islands until they improved, but this would incur refuelling problems and would jeopardise surprise. The number of ALC available

was limited, with no reserves in case of damage, and the use of the ships' life boats and motor boats for the main body would also pose difficulties. Most of these problems did not affect SHRAPNEL, which could be mounted from Africa with the existing forces so long as the naval forces were available. If there were not sufficient naval forces to execute both operations then ALLOY should have priority, as the forces for SHRAPNEL were believed sufficient even if all surprise was lost.

The COS met with Maund, the Directors of Plans, and the EPS on 1 October 1940 to consider this. A signal had been received from Freetown stating that the restowing for ALLOY and SHRAPNEL would be complete by 4 October 1940, which was much earlier than had been expected. Maund then gave a verbal explanation of Keyes' plan, which basically called for the harbours in the Azores to be entered by four Commandos using ships as 'trojan horses'. The harbours would be taken by a coup de main, with the original ALLOY force as a backup. This proposal was accepted, and the DCO and JPS were authorised to initiate preliminary preparations for the execution of the new plan. As part of these, the JPS examined the desirability of bringing ALLOY force back to the United Kingdom. This would relieve the congestion in Freetown harbour and ease the accommodation problem, as well as avoiding a deterioration in the health and morale of the troops being detained there under adverse conditions. It would be easier to assemble the required naval escorts if the convoy sailed from the United Kingdom, and this would also eliminate the problem of arranging a rendezvous for the components of the convoy in mid-ocean. The only

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33. COS(40) 10 (0)(JP) 'Operations to Capture the Azores' 30 Sep 40, CAB 80/106.

34. COS(40) 331 Mtg 1 Oct 40, CAB 79/7. For short explanation see COS (40) 10 (0) 'Operation ALLOY' 4 Oct 40, CAB 80/56.



disadvantage was that, if ALLOY were to be ordered as the force was approaching the United Kingdom; it would have to refuel before turning around.<sup>35</sup> This was seen to be a minor difficulty, and the COS decided on 4 October 1940 to order the ALLOY force back to the United Kingdom.<sup>36</sup> The COHQ had four Commandos released to it from home defence duties on 6 October 1940 to carry out BRISK, as the new plan was called. These Commandos were to be embarked at Inverary not later than 15 October 1940.<sup>37</sup> In order that forces would always be in a position to carry out ALLOY/BRISK, the 101st Royal Marine Brigade, now termed PARADOX force, was to proceed to Gibraltar and wait there until the Commandos were ready for BRISK before continuing on to the United Kingdom. The risks of the Portuguese becoming suspicious of this deployment were considered acceptable.<sup>38</sup>

Resources had also been found to reconstitute a close naval patrol of the Azores, though it was decided not to inform the Portuguese of this beforehand. If they asked they were to be informed that it was part of the blockade programme.<sup>39</sup> Even if the enemy managed to evade this patrol the forces for ALLOY/BRISK and SHRAPNEL were considered sufficient to dislodge them, provided that they did not have time to establish a formal defence. A new plan, termed FANWISE, was in the course of preparation for this latter contingency.<sup>40</sup>

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35. COS(40) 12 (0)(JP) 'Location of Forces ALLOY and SHRAPNEL' 3 Oct 40, CAB 80/106.

36. COS(40) 11 Mtg (0) 4 Oct 40, CAB 79/55.

37. WO to Eastern and Southern Commands telegram 83955 8 Oct 40 and telegram 84677 9 Oct 40, DEFE 2/116.

38. COS(40) 12 Mtg (0) 4 Oct 40, CAB 79/55.

39. COS(40) 798 'Naval Operations in the Atlantic' 4 Oct 40, CAB 80/19 and COS(40) 11 Mtg (0) 4 Oct 40, CAB 79/55.

40. COS(40) 10 (0) 'Operation ALLOY' 4 Oct 40, CAB 80/56.

The key personnel from the headquarters of the 102nd Royal Marine Brigade had been flown to Freetown on 1 October 1940. They had brought with them sketchy details of the new plans for the Azores operations, but nothing further had arrived by the time that PARADOX<sup>41</sup> force sailed for Gibraltar on 6 October 1940. The complete plan was flown out from the United Kingdom to Gibraltar on 10 October 1940 to await the arrival of the PARADOX force. As a temporary expedient, until PARADOX force returned to the United Kingdom, Admiral Somerville of Force 'H' was appointed the naval commander.

Keyes' expectations for action once his plan was approved are apparent in a minute he sent to Churchill on 9 October 1940, in which he noted that the plans were being sent out to Gibraltar on the following day. 'My directive gives me command of the operations conducted by the irregular forces. I hope this will not be overlooked'. This minute was received by Ismay, who, seeing a storm brewing, quickly marshalled the arguments against Keyes' command of the operation. He pointed out to Churchill, should Keyes speak to him, that the appointment of the naval commander would depend on the naval forces employed in the operation, and that, if the operation were launched in the near future, these forces would have to come from Force 'H' under Somerville. The COS were in the process of preparing directives for the commanders of BRISK, and this was on their agenda for the following day. Ismay therefore asked Churchill to take no decision on Keyes' minute until he had discussed the matter with Pound,<sup>42</sup> even if not with the other COS. Pound was adamant on this point

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41. War Diary 101st Royal Marine Brigade 1 and 6 Oct 40, ADM 202/34.

42. Ismay to Churchill 9 Oct 40 with Keyes to Churchill 9 Oct 40 annexed, PREM 3/361/6.



when it was raised in the COS meeting. He maintained that BRISK and SHRAPNEL were combined operations, not raids, and this was the governing factor as far as the responsibility for the operations was concerned, rather than the composition of the troops. It was clearly stated in Keyes' Directive that combined operations would be worked out by the service departments through the planning staffs and the commanders designated, with the technical advice only of the DCO. The COS were therefore responsible for the arrangements and outline planning and the force commanders for the detailed planning, preparation, and execution of the operations. As BRISK was to be merged with PARADOX, rather than being a pure commando operation, this was a valid point, and the argument did not proceed further. Keyes' point, however, did have some logic, and was in line with the earlier tentative arrangements for the Commandos' execution of MENACE. The denial to him of responsibility for BRISK certainly added to Keyes' frustration with combined operations in general, and was a further blow to his relationship with the CNS and EPS.

Members of the EPS were present at this meeting to explain the intricacies of the changes in the operational plans. 101st Royal Marine Brigade would reach Gibraltar by 14 October 1940, and, if the operation were necessary before 15 October 1940, the original ALLOY would take place. BRISK would be ready by 15 October 1940, and PARADOX force would return to the United Kingdom as soon as escorts could be found. Upon his return to the United Kingdom Brigadier Morford would take command of both BRISK and PARADOX forces, but, in the interim there was, unfortunately, an awkward gap when, although Morford had no responsibility for the BRISK plan and assault

orders, he would be expected to take command of BRISK force if the coup de main failed. A representative of the EPS was flown out to Gibraltar to explain this to him.<sup>43</sup>

The 101st Royal Marine Brigade reached Gibraltar on 15 October 1940, to find the new instructions waiting. The date for its return to the United Kingdom had not been set, although every attempt was being made to find an escort. Morford was, not unexpectedly, rather unhappy with the interim command arrangements. They would leave him, as he complained in a letter to the CIGS on 16 October 1940, in command of a force spread out over a distance of 150 miles, the greater part of whom he had never seen before, whose commanders and organisation were unknown to him, and who would already be engaged with the enemy. During this he would be without adequate signals or staff. Moreover he was upset by the general intent of the new plan. He reminded the CIGS that he had raised, equipped, and trained the Royal Marine Brigade for opposed landings, and its organisation had been designed to fit in landing craft for use as either a raiding force or the assaulting force of a larger landing operation. He had been given to understand in his directive for ALLOY on 25 July 1940 that the Royal Marines were to be used as the assaulting force, to be relieved as soon as possible by garrison troops. These new instructions for BRISK seemingly relegated the Royal Marines to the status of garrison troops, as the assault force was composed of other units 'which cannot have had the same amount of specialised training in this type of operation'. This would certainly lower the morale of the officers and men of his force, and make them feel that

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43. COS(40) 13 Mtg (0) 10 Oct 40, CAB 79/55.



they had been deceived. It would be the

greatest blow to the pride and traditions of the Royal Marine Corps since its foundation over 250 years ago. It is the equivalent of ordering the Brigade of Guards to consolidate a position which is to be captured by the Royal Engineers - a complete misuse of the characteristics of different arms.

Morford asked that if BRISK plan was to be retained the Royal Marines should be withdrawn from the force and employed on other duties more  
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suited to their characteristics and training.

The COS on 18 October 1940 agreed that PARADOX force should  
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leave Gibraltar immediately. It sailed that same day, arriving in the Clyde on 27 October 1940. Keyes in the meanwhile visited the Commandos in training for BRISK at Inverary, and inspected the assault shipping. There was some problem in the ships selected by the EPS and Keyes lodged a complaint on this on his return to London on 22 October 1940. He reminded the COS that he had drafted the original BRISK plan and had considered himself responsible for the operation, but then 'officers of other departments were brought into the proceedings', and they assumed the responsibility for drafting the orders and generally organising the expedition. They had chosen two ships, the Glengyle and the Ulster Monarch, each of which was to carry two Commandos. There was no problem with the Glengyle, but the Ulster Monarch had been inspected by both Keyes and Brigadier J.C. Haydon, the commander of the Special Service (SS) Brigade into which the Commandos had been grouped, and they had agreed that she was totally unfit to carry 900 men for a voyage in the Atlantic in the

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44. Morford to CIGS 16 Oct 40, PREM 3/330/7 and COS(40) 22 (0)(JP)  
'Operation BRISK' 31 Oct 40, CAB 80/106.

45. COS(40) 15 Mtg (0) 18 Oct 40, CAB 79/55.

winter months, especially if the troops were expected to fight after disembarking. Garnons-Williams had originally suggested that this would be the case and had made arrangements to take up a second vessel of the Ulster Monarch type, but he had been overruled by the EPS. The EPS had favoured one vessel 'for tactical reasons', and considered the Ulster Monarch sufficient. Keyes considered the EPS argument to be rather unsound as far as the tactics were concerned, and, in respect to the accommodation needed for the two Commandos, the one ship was 'absolutely out of the question'. He had inspected the Royal Scotsman, a sister ship, and now requested that she should also be taken up. The special brows ordered for the Ulster Monarch had also been found to be far too heavy and unwieldy for rapid disembarkation, and Keyes had ordered the VACTC to order 24 of a lighter design. Keyes reported that although some valuable training had been done and the two Commandos in the Glengyle were ready, the remainder had suffered some delay in the embarkation and then disembarkation of the Ulster Monarch, which had developed engine trouble during his visit. Though Keyes regretted the delay in the readiness of the Commandos for BRISK he felt that 'under the existing system such delays and miscarriages are likely to recur'.<sup>46</sup>

On 24 October 1940 the COS called in Maund and the EPS for a discussion on the shipping problem and on the impending arrival of PARADOX force. To start with the term BRISK would, from 26 October 1940, now cover the activities of both forces. The problem with the shipping was resolved by directing that the Royal Scotsman be taken up immediately. Although the complete BRISK force could not sail until this was accomplished, and the Ulster Monarch's engines repaired, a composite force sufficient to undertake the whole operation

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46. Keyes to COS 22 Oct 40, PREM 3/330/7.



in good weather, or part of it in bad weather, could still be made available at 48 hours notice. As soon as Morford arrived in the United Kingdom he would assume command, under the general direction of the COS, of BRISK, and should meet in London with the commanders of the Commandos, the naval commander - if available, and representatives of the DCO and EPS. They were to discuss detailed plans for the occupation of the Azores, on the differing assumptions that the enemy had forestalled the operations and that he had not. Both BRISK and SHRAPNEL were, if possible, to take place simultaneously, but the question of the timing of the operations could be considered when the occasion arose. Meanwhile, the EPS were to report on the length of time SHRAPNEL force could be left at Freetown, given the conditions there. Finally although BRISK was to be left at 48 hours notice from 26 October 1940, it was agreed to give the personnel of 101st Royal Marine Brigade 7 days leave upon their arrival in the United Kingdom. <sup>47</sup>

Morford's conversations with the commando leaders and the JPS, after his arrival, had removed any misapprehensions he had of the BRISK plan. After having the reasons for adopting it and the true nature of the relationship between the commandos and Royal Marines explained to him, he changed his views considerably, and was in fact to oppose later attempts to withdraw the commandos from the operation. Details of the plan were then refined, and on 1 November 1940 Morford saw the COS at their morning meeting. The EPS also attended the meeting, but there was no representative of the DCO, and from this time on the DCO was to be excluded from virtually all BRISK planning. This was partly the result of the expansion of the authority of the EPS and partly because of the diversion of Keyes' attention to WORKSHOP. Mor-

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47. COS(40) 16 Mtg (0) 24 Oct 40, CAB 79/55.

ford had, under the brief given by the COS on 24 October 1940, examined the feasibility of the operation on the separate assumptions that the Germans had not forestalled him, and that they had. In the former case he considered the forces at his disposal sufficient for the task, though he did require certain modifications to the plan as conceived in London. He was even willing to carry out the operation with three Commandos instead of four. He had not been able to ascertain the state of training of the Argylls, but they would only be necessary if Terceira was to be occupied. Somerville in his capacity as naval commander had thought that to ensure success Madeira should also be seized, to enable the destroyers to refuel in its lee without interference. This question was referred to the EPS for study.

An operation based on the other assumption, that the enemy had established himself in the islands first, was an entirely different matter. Morford had prepared an appreciation on this, in which he expected that the enemy would land on each island with approximately 1,000 men, some artillery, and a few light tanks. After two days the beaches and landing places in at least the main ports might well be wired. Any form of coup de main would then be out of the question. Even if the BRISK force, as then constituted, succeeded in getting ashore, it could not deal with artillery and tanks. The original plan, a deliberate assault on the ports, would be insufficient, and a landing on a far wider front would be necessary. In winter conditions this could result in a long wait, and at least three ships, capable of carrying a sufficient number of landing craft and disembarking them rapidly, would be needed. Only the one Glen ship allocated



to BRISK met these requirements. To take up the other two Glen ships would, however, delay the despatch of landing craft to the Middle East. A decision would thus have to be made as to which had priority. These conditional restrictions on the ability to achieve success were wholly unsatisfactory to the COS. The War Cabinet was under the impression that the BRISK force was complete and able to handle any contingency, and now the military commander was taking the position that, with the shipping at his disposal, BRISK was not feasible if the enemy occupied the islands first. The COS thought that the planning must be adequate to cover the worst case, and that there must be no possibility of failure. Morford and the JPS were therefore instructed to go back and re-examine the problem and to produce a statement on the decisions<sup>48</sup> required to place BRISK on a satisfactory footing.

The JPS review of the situation, conducted with Morford and a representative of the DCO, was completed on 5 November 1940. It was far from encouraging. If the Germans established themselves in sufficient strength and with a sufficient margin of time the result would be a 'fundamental alteration of the whole character of the operations' that were envisaged. The assumption had always been that there would only be Portuguese resistance, or German resistance on a minor scale and without sufficient time being given them to organise the defences. If the worst case was now considered, i.e. if the Germans established themselves in force 48 hours or more before the landings, it was 'extremely unlikely that any force, however organised, would be able to attempt the capture of either island

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48. COS(40) 19 Mtg (0) 1 Nov 40, CAB 79/55 and Note on 2 Nov 40, DEFE 2/116. The actual plan provided for only Nos. 4, 7, and 8 Commandos.

before the fine weather period between May and September 1941'. By then the Germans would obviously have had time to thoroughly prepare the defences, and the problem would then be 'an entirely new one' which should be examined on a separate basis. As all the Glen ships would then be required, operations in the Middle East would be drastically affected.

If BRISK was based on the original assumption of Portuguese resistance only, the current preparations were adequate. Morford had still to inspect the Commandos, and thought that further training in boat work might be necessary. If this were so it would, because of the limited means available, probably interfere with the combined operations training programme of 1st Corps at the CTC. However, as the operations against the Azores 'appeared to be more positive' than any operations that might be given to the 1st Corps, priority should be given to the BRISK forces. One Glen ship was still necessary for BRISK, and the decision would soon have to be made whether BRISK or the Middle East had priority. As far as the capture of Madeira was concerned, there were a number of alternatives. The destroyers, which would only have two and a half days fuel left when they reached the Azores, could, in order of preference, fuel at the Azores after capture; under the lee of the Azores, weather permitting; under the lee of Madeira, where conditions were likely to be better; in Funchal harbour in Madeira, with the concurrence of the Portuguese or by forcing Portuguese acquiescence by threat of bombardment; or in Madeira after capture. If the capture of Madeira were to be decided upon it was estimated that one battalion of troops landed from destroyers would be suffi-



cient. This force would best come from Gibraltar, as the delay involved in sending it from the United Kingdom would increase the chance of the enemy establishing himself in Madeira as well as in the Azores. There was an accommodation problem at Gibraltar and the force might have to remain on board ship, but this could be accepted. The preparation of a force for this purpose had been proposed by Admiral Somerville, who had pressed for the immediate occupation of Madeira if Gibraltar became untenable.<sup>49</sup>

Keyes was astonished by this report, and it was later to be the cause of many caustic comments on the planning ability of the EPS. At the time, however, he was deeply involved in WORKSHOP. He did seize upon the opportunity, now that he considered BRISK unlikely to take place, of requesting the return of the Commandos allocated for the past month to the operation.<sup>50</sup> Whether Keyes' disenchantment with BRISK was linked with the fact that he no longer exercised any control over it is debatable, but, if the BRISK requirement held, the planned departure of two Special Service battalions, i.e. four Commandos, to the Middle East in December would leave the COHQ with only one Special Service battalion for operations from the United Kingdom. This battalion was already earmarked for some raiding operations.

The COS reacted unfavourably to the JPS report. Confronted with the possibility of not being able to seize the Azores if they were occupied by the Germans, the CIGS thought that, in view of their importance, it might be better to seize them immediately. Pound could not

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49. COS(40) 29 (0)(JP) 'Operations against the Azores' 5 Nov 40, CAB 80/106.

50. Notes on 5 and 18 Nov 40, DEFE 2/116.

accept this view, believing that their capture could not compensate for the loss of Gibraltar. The current naval commitments, particularly when considering impending operations in the Mediterranean, would in any case make it unlikely that the planned naval forces would be available. Further discussion on the topic was postponed<sup>51</sup> until Morford could be present. Morford met the COS on 8 November 1940. His assessment being accepted, he was instructed, at the urging of Pound, to formulate a plan for the capture of the Azores in the winter weather, even if the Glens were not available, using as a basis the forces allocated for BRISK. Morford, faced with Keyes' request for the return of the Commandos, had by now become convinced of their worth and insisted that they must remain part of the force, even if the operation were only to face Portuguese resistance, if success were to be assured. The COS accepted this point, though Keyes thought Morford over-cautious. The inclusion in the planning of a battalion held at Gibraltar to seize Madeira was discussed, but it was seen to be an unnecessary complication. Pound was confident that the Royal Navy could prevent the Germans from occupying Madeira, and the idea was dropped. The decision on the Glen ships was deferred, most probably until the new plan could be<sup>52</sup> examined.

Dill and Portal were not as certain as Pound of Gibraltar's worth relative to the Azores. This issue was brought up again on 9 November 1940, this time by Portal, who, in view of the seemingly grave danger of the Germans establishing themselves in the Azores first, thought that military considerations made it desirable that

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51. COS(40) 23 Mtg (0) 7 Nov 40, CAB 79/55.

52. COS(40) 24 Mtg (0) 8 Nov 40, CAB 79/55.



BRISK and SHRAPNEL be carried out immediately. The COS finally agreed that the secretary should draft a note to Churchill along these lines.<sup>53</sup> This note was ready for the next morning's meeting, but Pound still had doubts as to the advisability of immediate action. He suggested that before the immediate execution of the operations was recommended to Churchill, all possible German reactions should be investigated. Dill, who had originally raised the matter, responded that the JPS already had a great deal of work in hand. Pound's proposal was nevertheless accepted, and the JPS were instructed to prepare yet another report. After this tonic the COS had to face Keyes himself. After his request for the release of the BRISK Commandos had been denied he had, characteristically, gone to Churchill for support. Keyes' arguments were based on the fact that in late October and early November, when there had been mechanical problems with both the Ulster Monarch and Royal Scotsman, Morford had prepared to conduct BRISK without the Commandos if necessary. Keyes thought Morford could still do so, but after some discussion he agreed that there had been some misunderstanding as to the intended use of the Commandos, and that they must now be considered<sup>54</sup> an integral part of the BRISK plan.

The JPS evaluation was that the most likely German response to a British occupation of the Azores and Cape Verdes, other than an advance through Spain, might be to demand the use of naval and air bases in Portugal, which would extend the attacks on the British lines of communication to the south and west, and further complicate the British blockade problem. Such actions might also tilt Spanish policy

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53. COS(40) 384 Mtg 9 Nov 40, CAB 79/7.

54. COS(40) 385 Mtg 11 Nov 40, CAB 79/7.

in favour of the Axis. Madeira might be seized by the Germans, and they might acquire air and naval bases in the Canaries. The JPS suggested that an alternative to the execution of BRISK and SHRAPNEL might be to approach the United States and induce it to lease certain facilities, such as a flying-boat base, in the Portuguese islands. This idea had the tentative support of the Foreign Office. It would give the United States a stake in the islands, would not necessarily compromise Portuguese neutrality, and might deter a German seizure of the islands. The JPS cautioned, however, that it would still have to be made clear to the Americans that, in the event of Gibraltar becoming untenable, the British must have the use of the facilities in the Azores themselves. This would be a delicate act of diplomacy, and if success was doubtful it might be better to ask the United States to station permanently a warship in the islands. In the end none of these alternatives<sup>55</sup> proved feasible.

The COS carefully studied these recommendations on 16 November 1940, and then drafted a report to the War Cabinet giving the military view that it was desirable to seize the islands immediately.<sup>56</sup> When the JPS heard of this decision they proposed, again unsuccessfully,<sup>57</sup> that Madeira be included. The COS examined and amended their draft on 19 November 1940, but before it could be submitted the question of BRISK had come up in a meeting of the Defence Committee (Operations) called at Keyes' instigation to review the inter-

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55. COS(40) 33 (0) (JP) 'German Reactions to Operations SHRAPNEL and BRISK' 13 Nov 40 and COS(40) 34 (0)(JP) 'Operations Against the Azores' 13 Nov 40, CAB 80/106.

56. COS(40) 391 Mtg 16 Nov 40, CAB 79/7 and COS(40) 22 (0) 21 Nov 40, CAB 80/56 (this is closed until 1991).

57. JP(40) 133 Mtg 18 Nov 40, CAB 84/2.



related WORKSHOP. Keyes informed the committee that two Glens and one of the Dutch LSI(M) were required to transport the WORKSHOP assault force, and these were scheduled to leave the United Kingdom in a convoy on 15 December 1940. The conversion of the third Glen was due to be completed in the latter part of December. There was some doubt as to the exact date, but Keyes said he had been assured that it would be ready by 15 December 1940, in which case there would be little or no disruption in the arrangements for BRISK. This optimism was not shared by Pound, who more realistically held that the ship would not be ready for service until early in January 1941. Most of the discussion was concerned with the feasibility and desirability of WORKSHOP, and the committee finally agreed to approve in principle the sailing of the WORKSHOP force on 15 December 1940.<sup>58</sup> To effect this Keyes was authorised to withdraw the Glen ship and Commandos from BRISK force. The Commandos would be replaced by a regular battalion, or by other Commandos, as required. The Defence Committee (Operations) wanted to ensure, however, that there would be no time<sup>59</sup> during which it would be impossible to carry out BRISK.

The decision on WORKSHOP temporarily dampened the desire of the COS for the immediate execution of BRISK and SHRAPNEL, as all the operations could certainly not be carried out concurrently. The plan for the assault of the Azores against German opposition, FANWISE, on which work had started at the beginning of October 1940, was completed about this time. The plan was submitted to the COS on 19 November 1940. The most productive action was seen as the capture of Horta, which would require two battleships, an aircraft carrier, and

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58. COS(40) 394 Mtg 19 Nov 40, CAB 79/7.

59. DO(40) 45 Mtg 19 Nov 40, CAB 69/1.

approximately seventeen destroyers, with the BRISK force reinforced with artillery and engineer units and carried in two Glen ships and two transports. The capture of Ponta Delgade would require one battleship or cruiser, one aircraft carrier, approximately seventeen destroyers, and two submarines, with a force consisting of a four-battalion brigade with artillery and engineers, carried in two Glen ships and two transports. Even with these forces it was stressed that the plan was heavily dependent upon reasonable weather and upon the effectiveness of the ships' gunfire against coast and beach defences. It was noted that the latter had proved none too effective in MENACE. If the COS decided to proceed with these plans, which even then required more detailed study before they could be pronounced feasible, it was apparent that both islands could not be assaulted simultaneously, and a choice would have to be made. With WORKSHOP in the process of being mounted, however, FANWISE was entirely out of the question, and was not developed further.<sup>60</sup>

With the inevitable delay in the conversion of the third Glen ship the contradictions inherent in the Defence Committee (Operations) instructions became clear. Morford was invited to discuss his requirements with the COS on 20 November 1940, and he stated flatly that BRISK could not be considered a practicable military proposition without the use of one Glen ship or its equivalent. If the Glengyle were withdrawn for WORKSHOP as directed, it would have to be done about a week before the sailing of the convoy, i.e. about 8 December 1940, and it was doubtful whether the fitting out of the Glenearn could be accelerated so as to be ready by then. It thus appeared to be very difficult, if not impossible, to carry out the Defence Committee

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60. COS(40) 37 (0)(JP) 'Operations Against the Azores' 19 Nov 40, CAB 80/106 and COS(40) 394 Mtg 19 Nov 40, CAB 79/7.



(Operations) instructions. The COS then agreed to have the DCO, in consultation with Morford and the EPS, consider and report that same day as to whether the instructions could be fully implemented, or if they could not, to what extent BRISK would be affected by the withdrawal of forces for WORKSHOP.<sup>61</sup>

Keyes chaired this meeting that same morning. It was confirmed that the two Glen ships were needed for WORKSHOP, resulting in the withdrawal of the Glengyle no later than 13 December 1940. The Glenearn, if worked on night and day, could be completed by 15 December 1940, but, provided that the training of all the landing craft crews was previously completed and that the landing craft themselves were available, five more days would still be needed to commission her, store her, and work her up. Morford did not consider even this time adequate, and maintained that at least fifteen days would be required to bring the crew to the necessary standard of efficiency. The net result was that BRISK could not be conducted during the period 13 to 30 December 1940 if WORKSHOP was undertaken. Keyes, who had just been given personal command of WORKSHOP, stressed that if Morford's demands were met, regardless of the possibility or probability of BRISK being executed, the result would be the cancellation, or at least the postponement, of an offensive operation which was expected to have a major effect upon the conduct of the war in the Mediterranean. If enemy action posed a real threat to Gibraltar before 13 December 1940, WORKSHOP could always be abandoned and all efforts devoted to ensuring the success of BRISK.<sup>62</sup>

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61. COS(40) 395 Mtg 20 Nov 40, CAB 79/7 and COS(40) 27 Mtg (0) 20 Nov 40, CAB 79/55.

62. COS(40) 25 (0)(JP) 'Operations WORKSHOP and BRISK' 20 Nov 40, CAB 80/56.

The COS considered this report the following morning, 21 November 1940. A possible solution to the dilemma was suggested by Pound, who saw that the use of the harbour at Horta was not essential to the British, so long as it was denied to the Germans. If BRISK were initially confined to the capture of Ponta Delgada, which fortunately did not require the use of a Glen ship, the condition might be met. Naval forces should then be able to deny the use of Horta to the enemy until the necessary forces for its occupation could be assembled. The Glengyle could thus be released on 13 December 1940. Morford agreed to this, and was willing to release the Commandos on that date if they could be replaced by other Special Service troops. The COS consequently decided that BRISK would be modified during the period that a Glen ship was not available, to involve only the capture of the island of San Miguel.<sup>63</sup> This plan, termed TRUCK,<sup>64</sup> was approved by Churchill on 22 November 1940.

The JPS had earlier examined the accommodation problem for SHRAPNEL force at Freetown. Their opinion, which subsequently proved false, was that as long as the force was accommodated in barracks it could remain there indefinitely. Further problems were caused by a plan to send two battalions from the United Kingdom to provide a permanent garrison to defend Freetown against an overland attack by the French from Dakar. There was not sufficient accommodation for both forces, and none of the proposed solutions was fully satisfactory. The JPS recommended as the best the movement of the garrison battalions to Achimote on the Gold Coast, from whence they could sail to Freetown if SHRAPNEL was ordered by diverting liners returning from

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63. COS(40) 397 Mtg 21 Nov 40, CAB 79/7; COS(40) 27 Mtg (0) 21 Nov 40, CAB 79/55; Ismay to Churchill 21 Nov 40, PREM 3/361/1.

64. Note on Ismay to Churchill 21 Nov 40, PREM 3/361/1.



the Middle East to the United Kingdom, or by using the SHRAPNEL shipping after the operation ended. The COS accepted this on 4<sup>65</sup> November 1940.

All these relevant factors were considered at the Defence Committee (Operations) meeting on 25 November 1940, at which the COS recommendation for the immediate execution of BRISK and SHRAPNEL was submitted. Pound explained that the arguments for and against seizing the islands were very evenly balanced. It was true that carrying out the operations immediately might precipitate a German advance into Spain and Portugal, and thus bring about the loss of Gibraltar earlier than might have otherwise happened. The governing factor seemed to be the effect British action would have on the Spanish and Portuguese. Halifax thought that an invasion of the Azores would cause a very unfavourable reaction in Portugal, and would bring into effect the mutual defence treaty between Spain and Portugal. This would bring about the very crisis the Cabinet was trying to avoid. Considerable discussion ensued on these and other possible effects. There was much to be gained if the Spanish and Portuguese put up even a slight resistance to a German advance, but it would probably be necessary to send considerable forces to the Peninsula to stimulate this. If Lisbon or Cueta could then be held by British forces it would be better than merely controlling the Azores. From this point of view it would be unwise to seize the islands, thereby eliminating any chance for Spanish or Portuguese cooperation with the British. Dill, who had supported the immediate occupation of the islands from the start, did not have much faith in the amount of

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65. COS(40) 24 (0)(JP) 'Operation SHRAPNEL' 1 Nov 40, CAB 80/106 and COS(40) 373 Mtg 4 Nov 40, CAB 79/7.

opposition the Spanish or Portuguese were likely to give the Germans. The Germans would naturally chose a favourable opportunity to themselves if they in fact intended to enter the Peninsula. Under these circumstances, Dill would probably not be in a position to find forces strong enough to hold Lisbon or Cueta, and if the Azores were not seized in time everything might be lost. Churchill seized upon the capture of Cueta, which he did not think beyond the means available. He therefore told the COS to investigate the possibilities forthwith. This was termed COUNTERPOISE, but nothing was to come of it.<sup>66</sup> The discussion on the Azores continued, with Dill gaining some support from Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production, who favoured the immediate seizure of the islands to strengthen the naval position, on which in the long run everything would depend. He did not think that this would cause a German invasion of Spain, though it would be wise to secure the approval of Roosevelt beforehand.

This gave Pound an opening for the deciding argument. He attacked this idea of a strengthened naval position with the comment that if the Germans occupied the mainland of Spain and Portugal, and the Canaries, the British convoys would have to be routed via Trinidad and Halifax, and the holding of the Azores would not materially affect the situation. On its face value this was a remarkable assertion, effectively invalidating most of the assumptions on which operations against the Portuguese Atlantic islands had been based from the start. Considerable discussion in June 1940 had produced a somewhat different conclusion. Pound continued that, if the Spanish did resist the Germans and gave the British the use of the Canaries, the British would be much better placed for controlling trade. It was therefore gener-

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66. COS(40) 43 (0) (JP) 'Capture of Cueta' 4 Dec 40, CAB 80/106.



ally agreed that if Franco could be offered any inducement to resist a German attack on the Peninsula, and to give the British, in such an event, the use of facilities on the mainland and in the Canaries, this would be much preferable to an assault on the Azores. On the whole the members of the committee did not consider the arguments for carrying out BRISK and SHRAPNEL to be overwhelming, and they consequently thought it would be better to wait and see whether a more suitable moment would arise. Meanwhile, everything was to be kept in readiness so that the maximum advantage could be taken of any opportunity. The forces for BRISK and SHRAPNEL were therefore to be retained at 48 hours notice, and the situation reviewed in ten days<sup>67</sup> or a fortnight.

On 26 November 1940 Keyes sent a note to the COS informing them that he intended to withdraw Nos. 3 and 4 Special Service Battalions<sup>68</sup> from their commitment to BRISK on 1 December rather than 13 December. The original allotment of two Special Service battalions, i.e. four Commandos, had been reduced to three Commandos because of the shortage of accommodation on board the ships, and the loss of the Glen ship would further reduce the requirement to one Special Service battalion, which would be embarked in the two Monarch class ships. The early release would enable Nos. 3 and 4 Special Service Battalions to take some leave before their departure for WORKSHOP. The JPS was advised of Keyes' intentions, and recommended approval, which was<sup>69</sup> granted by the COS on 27 November 1940. On 4 December 1940 Pound

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67. DO(40) 46 Mtg 25 Nov 40, CAB 69/1.

68. Note on 26 Nov 40, DEFE 2/116.

69. COS(40) 404 Mtg 27 Nov 40, CAB 79/8 and JP(40) 140 Mtg 30 Nov 40, CAB 84/2.

reported to the Defence Committee (Operations) that, owing to the naval disposition for EXCESS and WORKSHOP, BRISK must be ordered by 6 December 1940 or else it could not take place. The inability to carry out BRISK for the period 13 to 30 December 1940, with reliance on TRUCK, had already been accepted, and the committee 'took note' that<sup>70</sup> the period was now extended from 6 to 30 December 1940.

At this point the liaison between the agencies involved in BRISK seems to have been somewhat disjointed. The EPS informed the COS on 5 December 1940 that Morford had not been advised that the Special<sup>71</sup> Service troops for BRISK had been changed five days earlier. In addition to this unexplained lapse, there seemed to be some doubt as to whether TRUCK would be mounted for the period 7 to 13 December or the simultaneous seizure of both islands would still be attempted. The plan for the force for BRISK had finally been issued on 29 November 1940, and, despite Morford's earlier statements, it now seemed that the plan could be adjusted to capture both islands simultaneously<sup>72</sup> without using a Glen ship. The JPS were instructed to resolve these matters immediately, and to submit a statement showing the preparedness of the force.

The JPS replied on the following day. No. 5 Special Service Battalion had not yet completed mobilisation. Morford had not yet briefed the commander, and the battalion had had less time for preparation than had been originally programmed. Under these circumstances, although everything possible was being done to hasten the

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70. DO(40) 47 Mtg 4 Dec 40, CAB 69/1.

71. COS(40) 416 Mtg 5 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.

72. '101 Force Outline Plan and Maintenance Project' 29 Nov 40, DEFE 2/117.



state of readiness, it was not possible to stipulate whether the operation could be launched at 48 hours notice until the report of an officer visiting Morford had been received. In addition it had since been learned that the Glencarn would not be ready until 7 January 1941. The JPS considered that the Glen ship was in fact essential for BRISK, and thus for the period from 6 December to 7 January only TRUCK could be mounted. This would involve the Ettrick, carrying the Headquarters 101st Royal Marine Brigade and the 1st Battalion, Royal Marines; the Pulaski, carrying the Argylls; and the Ulster Monarch, with half of No. 5 Special Service Battalion. A store ship, an oiler, and an armed yacht were also to be used. The remaining ships then being held for BRISK, including the Karanja with the 5th Battalion, Royal Marines and the Royal Scotsman with the other half of No. 5 Special Service Battalion, would be kept in readiness, as they might be required any time after the capture of Ponta Delgada.<sup>73</sup> Intelligence for the operation was seemingly very good, as GS(P) at the War Office published a translation of the current<sup>74</sup> Portuguese defence orders for the Azores on 4 December 1940.

The changeover of operations from BRISK to TRUCK was effected on 6 December 1940. The COS were informed the following day that No. 5 Special Service Battalion had been sufficiently mobilised to send the necessary troops, and that this relief had been completed satisfactorily, although Morford had not yet had an opportunity to vouch for the state of training of the unit.<sup>75</sup> The priority accorded to opera-

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73. COS(40) 44 (0)(JP) 'Operations BRISK and TRUCK' 6 Dec 40, CAB 80/106.

74. Note on 4 Dec 40, DEFE 2/116 and copy with 101 Force Outline Plan 29 Nov 40, DEFE 2/117.

75. COS(40) 419 Mtg 7 Dec 40, CAB 79/8 and GS(P)/907 4 Dec 40, DEFE 2/117.

tions against the Atlantic Islands would continue to result in some friction with the DCO. The transport Ettrick, earmarked for TRUCK, was damaged by a heavy gale early in December 1940. The COS, in order to keep TRUCK at 48 hours notice, decided to allot the Glengyle, part of Keyes' Force 103 for WORKSHOP, to TRUCK for about a fortnight, until the Ettrick was repaired. Although the COS agreed that, once the stores for TRUCK had been loaded on the Glengyle, and reasonable precautions taken to secure them, she could be returned to Keyes for training, the time required for stowing and removing the stores would result in a loss of six days of much needed training for Keyes' force. This decision was taken at the Defence Committee (Operations) level, an indication of the limited resources available and the careful consideration given to their allocation.

76

Hornby protested against this decision, suggesting that, as the stores were nearly duplicated on board the two ships, it would be possible to stow the items peculiar to TRUCK within the 48 hour time limit allowed for sailing.

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Keyes, when appraised of the decision, also strongly objected for a number of reasons, among which was that the EPS estimate of the transfer time was 'quite inaccurate in light of practical experience'. He then submitted the characteristic suggestion that, as No. 3 Special Service Battalion, then embarked in the Glengyle, had been one of the original components of BRISK, he should use the Glengyle, stowed as it was, to execute BRISK if the operation were ordered before the Ettrick was repaired. Haydon also supported this proposal, which would allow the maximum amount of training to be

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76. COS(40) 431 Mtg 17 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.

77. Hornby to COS 17 Dec 40, DEFE 2/613.



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accomplished. What Morford may have thought of it, if he was informed, is not known, but he equally protested, for his own reasons, at the transfer of stores to the Glengyle. He felt that if the ship were handed back to Keyes after restowing, he could not guarantee the safety of the stores nor the 48 hours readiness to sail. The COS considered both of these protests on 19 December 1940, but

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held to their original decision. This incident well illustrates Keyes' views on the conduct of operations, including his dislike of the interference of the relatively junior and inexperienced officers of the JPS, and of the EPS in particular.

On 21 December Churchill wrote that, 'as we have a little time on hand', it would be a good thing for Keyes and Haydon to confer with Morford and the JPS to see if the plans could be simplified or

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modified. The dispute over the restowing of the Glengyle had just ended, and Churchill was concerned about 'undue heavy weather being made' about BRISK and SHRAPNEL. Hornby and the EPS met on 22 December 1940 to discuss the situation. They were convinced that there would be no further troubles in regard to BRISK and SHRAPNEL except for the allocation of shipping. 'So long as a Glen ship was earmarked for BRISK there would be trouble between the DCO and the commander of BRISK whose requirements must sometimes clash'. The only solution appeared to be the cancellation of BRISK in favour of TRUCK. In this regard a report was being prepared on the future of the Glen ships, once a decision was made on their allocation the

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whole situation would be clarified.

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78. DCO to Adm 1346/19 Dec 40, PREM 3/361/6.

79. COS(40) 433 Mtg 19 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.

80. Churchill to Ismay 21 Dec 40, PREM 3/361/6.

81. Notes 22 Dec 40, DEFE 2/116.

The report was ready on 23 December 1940. It recommended that one Glen ship be retained in the United Kingdom for BRISK, for any other unforeseen combined operations, and for combined operations training, at least until the conversion of the Dutch LSI(M) and Belgian LSI(S) was completed in January 1941. As the Ettrick would not be ready until 11 January, no immediate decision was required. By 6 January, however, optimism over the maintenance of Spanish neutrality was such that TRUCK was considered adequate for the present, and it was agreed that BRISK need not be remounted as planned. This conformed with Churchill's views, and TRUCK was not only retained, but place on 96, rather than 48<sup>82</sup>, hours notice to sail.

On 9 January 1941 Dill brought up for a second time the question of the location of the SHRAPNEL force. This force had been at Freetown since September 1940, and although its sick rate had recently been lowered from 23% to 16%, there was no doubt that if it were left at Freetown much longer its operational value would be 'seriously reduced'. Dill posed three possible options: return the force to the United Kingdom and conduct SHRAPNEL from there; replace the force at Freetown with a fresh force; or, as had been suggested by the commander of 102nd Royal Marine Brigade, introduce armed men in plain clothes into the Cape Verdes to carry out a 'fifth column' operation. Of the three options, he preferred the return of the force to the United Kingdom, and this was agreed to by the COS on 11 January 1941.<sup>83</sup> SHRAPNEL, however, would take 14 days to execute from the United Kingdom, as opposed to 7 days for BRISK, and this

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82. COS(40) 52 (0)(JP) 'Allocation of Glen Shins' 23 Dec 40, CAB 80/106 and COS(41) 9 Mtg 6 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.

83. COS(41) 5 (0) 'Operation SHRAPNEL' 9 Jan 46, CAB 80/56 and COS (41) 15 Mtg 11 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.



meant that either BRISK must be delayed in order to carry out the operations simultaneously, or SHRAPNEL would have to be carried out without surprise. As the British were to occupy the Cape Verdes to prevent their being used by the German, loss of surprise for SHRAPNEL seemed to be a justifiable risk. Churchill gave his assent to the return of SHRAPNEL force on 18 January 1941, although he was also inclined to introduce the plain clothes agents. 'Even a couple of hundred would keep the place sweet'.<sup>84</sup> The COS asked the JISC to consider this, as well as the infiltration of agents into the Azores.

The records of the next meeting of the COS on this subject are closed until 1991, but it may be assumed that some such measures were in fact taken.<sup>85</sup>

The COS had decided to give SHRAPNEL force 14 days leave on its return to the United Kingdom, and thereafter to hold it at the same 96 hours notice as the TRUCK force. With the advent of staff conversations with the Portuguese, however, there was some question of the necessity of reconstituting the force. A delay in starting these conversations, combined with the imminence of the SHRAPNEL force's arrival in the United Kingdom, resulted in other arrangements being made. The COS discussed the situation on 21 February 1941 with the Deputy AGRM, the commander of the Royal Marine Division, and the JPS.

Political developments and the latest reports on the strength of the garrison in the Cape Verdes - 50 native troops and 30 policemen, indicated that a strong striking force might not be necessary. All that was apparently required was the preparation for a peaceful

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84. Ismay to Churchill 12 Jan 41, PREM 3/361/1.

85. COS(41) 27 Mtg 23 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.

occupation of the islands by a force of about one infantry battalion. There were in fact some extra British infantry battalions then in West Africa, in 161st Brigade, which had been sent out for security purposes after MENACE, and which was scheduled to remain there until April or May 1941. It seemed possible to give the GOC West Africa the task of providing a force using whatever shipping or warships were available at the time. This would have the advantage of enabling BRISK and SHRAPNEL to be executed simultaneously. It would free the Royal Marine battalions for the formation of the Royal Marine Division, and would result in a force being available in the United Kingdom for any other operations that might be required. It would also release the transports held for SHRAPNEL to trade. The reconstitution of a special force for the Cape Verdes could be reconsidered when the return of 161st Brigade to the United Kingdom was imminent. The COS agreed to this course of action, subject to the concurrence of the GOC West Africa. Pending this SHRAPNEL would remain at 96 hours notice<sup>86</sup> in the United Kingdom.

The GOC West Africa replied to the COS on 8 March 1941, indicating that arrangements were in progress for an operation to seize the Cape Verdes. He wanted to retain the transports that had been loaded for SHRAPNEL, but was told that this was not possible. He was also informed that he could expect 96 hours notice in which to launch the<sup>87</sup> operation. When asked what was the earliest date by which the operation, termed BASEBALL, would be ready, he replied 1 April 1941. This prompted the JPS to recommend that SHRAPNEL be dismounted from

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86. COS(41) 62 Mtg 20 Feb 41 and COS(41) 64 Mtg 21 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.

87. JP(41) 196 'Operation SHRAPNEL' 11 Mar 41, CAB 84/28.



25 March 1941. At the same time the JPS noted that BRISK had been held in abeyance since 13 December 1940, although the troops were still earmarked for it. They therefore also recommended that TRUCK be retained and BRISK formally dismounted. Additional troops would thus be freed for other operations, and the Karanja, from TRUCK, and Kenya, from SHRAPNEL, could be taken up for conversion to LSI. Ettrick from TRUCK and Sobieski from SHRAPNEL could be released for trooping.<sup>88</sup>

The COS approved these recommendations on 22 March 1941, but their implementation was stopped by Churchill. He had just received reports of German submarines refuelling under the lee of the Azores, and was once again thinking of launching BRISK. As before, he thought that such action by the British would not greatly affect German plans, or cause the Spanish or Portuguese to invite the Germans in.<sup>89</sup> He would, however, consult Roosevelt beforehand. Sir Alexander Cadogan from the Foreign Office and Rear Admiral J.H. Godfrey, the Director of Naval Intelligence, (DNI), met the COS on this subject later in the afternoon. Godfrey believed that the reports of submarine refuelling were unfounded, though an observer was sent out to the Azores to investigate them. Cadogan had received other reports of German action in the Iberian Peninsula, however, and the committee agreed that it was possible that the Germans might be preparing the occupation of Portugal on the 'Norwegian style'. They considered that such an operation would almost certainly include an expedition to the Azores, and possibly the Cape Verdes, so the question of the

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88. JP(41) 219 'Operations SHRAPNEL, BRISK, and TRUCK' 21 Mar 41, CAB 84/28.

89. COS(41) 105 Mtg 22 Mar 41, CAB 79/10.

immediate execution of TRUCK and BASEBALL was resurrected,<sup>90</sup> After consultations with the Directors of Plans, who now tied the question of the Portuguese Atlantic islands to that of the Canaries, it appeared to the COS that there were disadvantages to immediate action. With the seemingly deteriorating situation, the original considerations against action, i.e., an occupation of the Portuguese islands, which would weaken Portuguese and Spanish determination to resist, no longer appeared to hold much weight. The danger of subsequent Spanish acquiescence in the German use of the Canaries, however, was now a serious, if not the governing, factor. Another hindrance would be the moral obligation imposed upon the British by their own precipitate action, especially since the recent staff conversations, to send some forces to assist Portugal. The COS therefore decided<sup>91</sup> to confirm the cancellation of BRISK and SHRAPNEL on 23 March 1941. TRUCK and BASEBALL would be sufficient for the time being.

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90. COS(41) 6 Mtg (0) 22 Mar 41, CAB 79/55.

91. COS(41) 7 Mtg (0) 23 Mar 41, CAB 79/55.



## CHAPTER XIV

### OPERATION WORKSHOP - THE PLANNED ATTACK ON PANTELLERIA

An increased attention to the actual employment of an amphibious force in the Middle East was engendered by the Italian attack on Greece on 28 October 1940. Keyes immediately wrote to the COS stating that the entry of Greece into the war provided a great opportunity for raiding the Dodecanese, using Crete as a base. He proposed that one or two Commandos be sent out at once for this purpose. Although their transport for raiding might prove a difficult problem, they could use local vessels.<sup>1</sup>

As Keyes was working on this idea, Churchill decided at a JPS meeting on 30 October 1940 that the capture of Rhodes was necessary. Keyes was accordingly instructed to prepare a plan. It was thought possible that plans for such an operation might already exist in the Middle East Command, and should be requested, but in the meanwhile perhaps a better plan could be developed in London. The FOPS, who had been working on plans for the elimination of Italy from the war,<sup>2</sup> were to consult the DCO on the matter.

As early as September Churchill had also spoken to Keyes about the capture of Pantelleria, a small island, with an airfield hewn out of its rocky surface, lying 140 miles to the southwest of Malta. Keyes had at that time considered that the island could be captured, and had gone as far as requesting that an aerial reconnaissance be conducted. This had been denied on the grounds that no operation

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1. Keyes to COS 29 Oct 40, K 140/3/1.

2. JP(40) 119 Mtg 30 Oct 40, CAB 84/2 and JP(40) 598 (0) 'Operations in the Eastern Mediterranean' 30 Oct 40, CAB 84/21.

against it had been approved. On 30 October Keyes again suggested to the COS the capture of the island. He saw it as a small operation, within the capability of his commandos, and thus within the scope of his directive. He thought that possession of the island would confer advantages in staging aircraft in the Middle East, in controlling the Tunis - Sicily channel, and in attacking Sardinia and the mainland of Italy. Although intelligence about the island was scanty, he nevertheless considered that its capture would not entail a major operation, as the forces involved would be limited<sup>3</sup> in number, and the duration of the action extremely brief.

As the mounting of BRISK had diverted some of the assault shipping intended for the Middle East, it was decided on 1 November 1940 to ask Wavell for the general outline and possible date of any combined operation he contemplated for the next six months. It was clearly undesirable to withhold ships from trade or to send the assault shipping to the Middle East unless there was a reasonable<sup>4</sup> prospect of their being required for definite operations.

On 2 November 1940 Keyes discussed the prospects of offensive action with the COS. He had, with the FOPS, looked at the capture of Rhodes, and had decided that it could not be accomplished by a raiding party. It would require a major operation, for which the forces and landing craft necessary would not be ready until early 1941. He did think, however, that a Special Service battalion on Crete would be useful in raiding Stampalia, Castel Rosso, Scarpanto,

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3. Keyes to COS 30 Oct 40, K 140/3/1.

4. COS(40) 369 Mtg 1 Nov 40, CAB 79/7.



and Kaso, and proposals for this had already been sent to Wavell. Although the COS thought these operations were desirable, they concentrated on the operation against Pantelleria, termed WORKSHOP, which 'had great attraction'. The VCNS, standing in for Pound, gave the Naval Staff view that the capture of the island would 'be most valuable for controlling the Central Mediterranean'. Dill approached the idea more cautiously, as he was concerned about the size of the garrison necessary to hold the island after its capture. The COS eventually decided that WORKSHOP was to have priority over the raids in the Dodecanese, and Keyes was instructed to prepare, in conjunction with the JPS, an outline plan for the operation,<sup>5</sup> with special reference to the later garrison requirement. This coincided with the dispute over Keyes' responsibilities as DCO. Pound's absence from this meeting was to be of consequence, as it is doubtful whether he would have agreed to the planning for WORKSHOP, which was not really a raid, being assigned to Keyes. The fact that the other services consented to Keyes' planning WORKSHOP supports Keyes' claims that the main opposition to him came from Pound.

Keyes grasped at what finally seemed a reasonable chance at action,<sup>6</sup> and wrote to Churchill about WORKSHOP on the same day. The discussion with the JPS, however, lasted over ten days, with Keyes noting that the planning staffs

raised every possible objection, and persistently derided the operation to my staff declaring that strategically it would have no effect upon the conduct of the war, and did not fit in with the war plan; operationally, it was hazardous; it would be quite impossible to land a second flight

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5. COS(41) 20 Mtg (0) 2 Nov 40, CAB 79/55 and JP(40) 615 (0) 'Operations in the Eastern Mediterranean' 2 Nov 40, CAB 84/22.

6. Keyes to Churchill 2 Nov 40, K 140/3/1.

of troops, and they condemned generally my views to my staff.<sup>7</sup>

Keyes' impatience with the progress of these talks led him to revert to his other proposal, and on 7 November 1940 he asked Churchill for permission to take two or three thousand of his 'braves' to Crete, for raiding in the Aegean. He was even willing to accept a reduction in rank to go with the force. He wanted to stay in the Mediterranean until the raiding operations there were well organised,<sup>8</sup> after which he could fly home and resume his appointment.

Keyes had increased the number of Commandos involved because he was becoming more and more convinced that BRISK would not take place. He had asked, unsuccessfully, for the return of the Commandos assigned to this operation on 14 November 1940. He then appealed directly to Churchill to release his troops from the 'side track' to which they had been diverted, suggesting that all three Glen ships and six Commandos be sent to the Middle East as soon as possible, as 'immediate offensive action against the Italians is of paramount importance as an effective way of aiding Greece'. He again offered to take command himself, though by now he was becoming intent on using the force if (possible for WORKSHOP first, and then for raiding from Crete or perhaps Malta.<sup>9</sup>

Keyes determination contrasted with the C-in-C's vague replies concerning future combined operations in the Mediterranean. On 8 November 1940 Wavell answered the COS inquiries by saying that he

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7. Keyes, 'History of Workshop' 2 Nov 40, DEFE 2/698.

8. Note by Keyes 7 Nov 40, K 140/3/1. There was a consistency in Keyes' character. During the Boxer Rebellion he had turned over command of his destroyer so he could find action with the Army moving against Peking.

9. Keyes to Churchill 14 Nov 40, PREM 3/507.



considered it 'most desirable' to hold the machinery for combined operations in the Middle East, in order to take advantage of any fleeting opportunities, but that he could only give a general indication of operations possible in the next six months. These included landings as part of major operations in the Western Desert; raids on the Libyan, Red Sea, and Italian Somaliland coasts; and the reduction of the Dodecanese. Owing to the 'rapidly changing situation',<sup>10</sup> the approximate dates of these were impossible to estimate. The JPS were also of little help to the COS in providing alternatives to Keyes' suggestions for offensive operations. On 14 November 1940 they produced an outline plan for operations against the Italian lines of communication in Libya, including raids on Tobruk and Benghazi, but the forces and assault shipping necessary were not likely to be available in the near future. The plan was nevertheless sent<sup>11</sup> out to the Middle East for information.

The JPS report on WORKSHOP, based on Keyes' outline plan and on the EPS estimate of the garrison needed to hold the island, was also ready on 14 November 1940. Keyes envisaged the use of the three Glen LSI(L), or of two of the Glens and a Dutch LSI(M). He was counting on surprise and speed of execution for success. As the air and shore defences posed a serious threat to the force, the approach, landing of troops, and withdrawal of shipping would all be accomplished in one night. The troops landed would be self-contained, and were expected to capture the island in the eight hours of darkness remaining after their landing. The anticipated nature of the fighting would maximise the Special Service troops' short-range firepower and

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10. C-in-C ME to WO 0315/8 Nov 40, WO 193/378.

11. JP(40) 653 'Future Plan Number 1 - Elimination of Italy' 14 Nov 40, CAB 84/22.

minimise their lack of support weapons.

The EPS estimate, on the other hand, was rather discouraging. They considered that the size of garrison required to hold the island as a working airbase would be approximately 5,500.<sup>12</sup> The port facilities were extremely poor, the island's water supply limited, and the civilian population that would have to be supported numbered about 9,500. The maintenance of the island would thus require considerable shipping movements, including a substantial escort, all of which would be subject to numerous air and submarine attacks. The EPS accordingly considered that, unless the strategic importance of the island outweighed all other considerations, 'the magnitude of the expedition and the maintenance of the garrison form a commitment which would neither justify the risks involved nor the effort necessary'. Keyes had seen this report before its submission, and had prepared a covering letter to it emphasising that, while the commitment was admittedly 'somewhat large', and the difficulties of installing and maintaining the garrison 'considerable', he nevertheless felt that at least a raid should be undertaken. Even a raid would serve as a great blow to Italian prestige and morale.

The JPS considered both alternatives in their report. Although they had 'every confidence' that WORKSHOP had a reasonable chance of success, they felt, 'in the broad strategic concept', that there were other operations which should be given priority. High on their list was the one against the Dodecanese, which was markedly different from the COS opinion of 2 November. The JPS held that the prospects

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12. Keyes acidly noted that the Italians held it with half that number, without control of the sea.



of a raid on Pantelleria were not very good, as the underground works on the airfield would require a disproportionate amount of time and effort to destroy.<sup>13</sup>

The COS considered this report on 15 November 1940. They agreed with the JPS that the effort required to hold Pantelleria seemed 'all out of proportion' to the results to be gained. Rather than kill off the entire project, however, they did think that a raid might be worthwhile. This was to be conducted in the context of a larger role for the Special Service troops in the Mediterranean. The priority was now to go to the capture of key islands in the Dodecanese, with additional raiding operations being conducted against the Italian mainland, throughout the Dodecanese, and against Pantelleria.<sup>14</sup>

Keyes managed to obtain a copy of the JPS report, and complained to Churchill that 'it blows hot and cold and like the recommendations of most councils of war - if acted upon, would result in nothing being done'. He agreed that it was important to attack the Dodecanese, and felt that Special Service troops should have been sent out for this long before. 'I urged this on 29 October but nothing has been done except to sidetrack the raiding troops and all the vessels ready to carry them for the problematic operations against the Portuguese islands'. Worse still, he noted, was 'that the JPS have not made any suggestions for the immediate despatch of troops and vessels to Crete to carry out offensive operations', and had merely referred a number of suggestions he had made to Cunningham and Wavell for their

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13. JP(40) 666 or COS(40) 35 (0)(JP) 'Capture of a Certain Island'  
14 Nov 40, CAB 84/23.

14. COS(40) 390 Mtg 15 Nov 40, CAB 79/7.

consideration. Keyes noted that he was meeting the COS the following day, and would then urge the sailing of the three Glens and six Com-<sup>15</sup>mandos out to the Middle East.

The focus on the use of the assault shipping for commando raiding operations had brought about, at least in Keyes' mind, a change in concept in the use of the assault shipping. The decision in September 1940 had been to send out the assault shipping and craft in order to provide the lift for an assault division for large scale operations. Keyes was now thinking in terms of an amphibious striking force, comprising the commandos and assault shipping, which would come under the COHQ in general and himself in particular, rather than general purpose resources under the C-in-Cs Mediterranean and Middle East. He thus told the COS on 18 November 1940 that he was certain that the C-in-Cs would 'welcome the cooperation (author's italics)<sup>16</sup> and help' which the force could give to their amphibious plans.

Keyes thought the meeting with the COS on 16 November 1940 was 'very amicable', but later noted that this was 'before I had seen the report of the COS Committee!' Keyes had given his views on the 'immense' strategic value of Pantelleria, and had suggested that the EPS figures for the garrison be reconsidered. The Italians held the island with a smaller garrison, and without control of the sea. Keyes also went over the other possibilities for raiding, and again<sup>17</sup> requested the despatch of the Glens and the Commandos. The official minutes were far more cautious in tone, indicating a consensus that the resources necessary to maintain Pantelleria as an active base,

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15. Keyes to Churchill 15 Nov 40, PREM 3/507.

16. Keyes to COS 18 Nov 40, DEFE 2/116.

17. Keyes to Churchill 16 Nov 40, K 140/3/1.



particularly as regards anti-aircraft defences, constituted an unsound commitment. A raid on the island, considering that little damage could be inflicted, and that the Italians would then probably reinforce the island, did not appear fruitful. Raids in the Dodecanese and against the Italian mainland, in view of their probable effect upon Turkey and Greece, were seen to be more valuable. The necessity for retaining one Glen and the Commandos for BRISK was upheld, and so the force available for the Middle East was considerably reduced. Keyes was therefore asked to provide a schedule of the expected availability of the assault shipping, along with proposals for their complement of Special Service troops. He was also to prepare an outline of possible raiding operations against the Italian  
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 mainland.

The JPS were immersed in the plan for the capture of the Dodecanese, termed MANDIBLES. They saw, as the first step, the seizure of the outlying, less heavily defended islands, after which the major assaults would take place against Rhodes and the key base of Leros. The attack on Rhodes would be launched from Crete and would require up to two infantry brigades and 2,000 Special Service troops, along with the majority of the available assault shipping. The assault on Leros would be staged from Rhodes, and would require a slightly  
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 smaller force including, for the first time, airborne troops.

Keyes continued to advise Churchill that WORKSHOP was 'hanging fire'. Churchill had been attracted to this operation as worthwhile

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18. COS(40) 26 Mtg (0) 16 Nov 40, CAB 79/55. The JPS report on the operation was JP(40) 667 (S) 'Operations Against Pantelleria' 14 Nov 40, CAB 84/23.

19. JP(40) 699 'The Capture of the Dodecanese' 24 Nov 40, CAB 84/23.

in its own right, and not merely as an outlet for Keyes' energies. The Dodecanese were proving less of a threat to British communications than had been forecast. MANDIBLES would require a larger force than WORKSHOP, and so would take longer to mount. The step-by-step method of attack envisaged in MANDIBLES would also take time. The possibility also existed that, by the time MANDIBLES was launched, the garrisons in the Dodecanese, reportedly low in morale and with failing supplies, might have been starved out, or, at least, would not be able to offer the degree of resistance predicted by the JPS. While the capture of the Dodecanese would undoubtedly have important effects, there would also be political difficulties concerning their future as they were claimed by both Greece and Turkey. Churchill therefore thought that it would be best to begin with WORKSHOP, which appeared to be the easier operation - he noted 'it is as well to begin with a success'. Pantelleria was also much nearer Italy, and might be a good prelude to operations against the mainland, which he considered 'of the very highest interest'. The commandos, less one Commando for the garrison of Pantelleria, might well remain in Malta after WORKSHOP in order to raid Italy. One of Churchill's other ideas on the subject, soon to become an integral part of the plan, was that WORKSHOP force might be passed through the Mediterranean under cover of a convoy to Malta or Egypt. This would divide the enemy's forces, with advantage to either WORKSHOP or the convoy.

On 19 November 1940 Churchill therefore held a meeting of the Defence Committee (Operations), with Keyes present, to consider WORKSHOP. The COS now reversed their position and conceded that WORK-



SHOP was both feasible and worthwhile, as long as further intelligence did not reveal a larger Italian garrison than assumed. Once the island was taken it was deemed inadvisable, on the grounds of morale, to let the Italians recapture it, so the idea of a raid was dropped entirely. Approval in principle was then given for WORKSHOP to be attempted in conjunction with the passage of a convoy through the Mediterranean, termed EXCESS, which was due to leave the United Kingdom on 15 December 1940. Keyes was authorised to start preparations for WORKSHOP, to include the withdrawal of the Glen ship and the Commandos earmarked for BRISK, provided they could be replaced by similar forces. The COS indicated that they still considered BRISK to be 'strategically of much greater importance than WORKSHOP', and the Defence Committee (Operations) accordingly added the stipulation that WORKSHOP could only be carried out if<sup>21</sup> it did not interfere with BRISK.

As with most official records, the minutes of this meeting are dry and reveal little dissention. In fact, the COS still opposed WORKSHOP. Churchill was firmly in favour of it, however, and the ensuing debate was rather acrimonious. The COS suggested that the C-in-C Mediterranean and the Governor of Malta should be consulted before a decision was made, to which Churchill retorted that the end result of such action would only be 'to put on two more committees to find two more reasons why it should not be done'. At one point he angrily turned to Ismay and commented 'General, pray make a note; the Council is resolved to do nothing!' Churchill was inclined to inform the C-in-Cs of the decision and then ask them for their comments. Given the C-in-Cs' latitude in the conduct of the war in

their respective theatres, such a course of action would invariably meet considerable resistance. Nevertheless, with Churchill's impatience for some form of offensive operation, there was no dissuading him.

After the meeting adjourned, Churchill saw Keyes alone. To add further to the difficulties of the operation, and to set the stage for a strictly partisan battle, Churchill now, without consulting the COS, offered Keyes command of the expedition. 'I won't have anything to do with it', he told Keyes, 'unless you are prepared to lead it'.<sup>22</sup> This was the goal Keyes had constantly sought. He would not even be required to take a reduction in rank, although, in order to avoid confusion, it was to be specified that his command would be definitely limited to those ships taking part in WORKSHOP. The reaction of the C-in-C Mediterranean to these arrangements needs little imagination.

Keyes that same day confronted the VCNS, alleging that the naval officers on the inter-service committees 'had done nothing to implement the decisions of the Defence Minister and the COS', and in fact had done much to 'impede' progress, making 'ceaseless' efforts to discredit the operation. The VCNS apparently agreed that this was 'most improper' and promised to put a stop to it. Keyes later<sup>23</sup> commented that 'nevertheless, the opposition persisted'.

Keyes set off for Scotland as soon as possible to supervise the training of the WORKSHOP force, termed Force 103, leaving the

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22. C. Aspinall-Oglander, Roger Keyes (London 1951), pp. 391-393.

23. Keyes, 'History of Workshop' 19 Nov 40, DEFE 2/698.



DDCO to run the COHQ in London. There was still much work to be done in tying up the planning, and Hornby met the JPS on 25 November to iron out some of the details. Cunningham had still not been informed of WORKSHOP, and the EPS was instructed to prepare a message asking for his comments. Consideration was also given to what should be said to the C-in-Cs. Middle East, Gibraltar, and Malta, and the  
<sup>24</sup>  
 SO Force 'H'. It was eventually decided that they should be informed of WORKSHOP only after Cunningham's comments had been received. In order to give as much time as possible to WORKSHOP force, and yet still allow for the necessary moonless period for the operation, EXCESS had its sailing date postponed to 18 December 1940.

A telegram was sent to Cunningham on 28 November 1940 informing him that the use of EXCESS to attack Pantelleria was 'under consideration'. An outline plan was sent, with the detailed plans to follow at a later date. Cunningham was also told that the Special Service troops, once in the Mediterranean, would come under his operational control. The garrison of Pantelleria would have to be provided from  
<sup>25</sup>  
 Malta.

Cunningham replied that, besides his fears of the inadequacy of the military plan, he was opposed to WORKSHOP on broad strategic grounds. He did not think that the possession of the island would materially contribute to the prosecution of the war in the Mediterranean, as the Italians could continue to operate from bases in Sicily. Pantelleria had not posed a very serious threat to the Allies, whereas Allied possession of it would not be a 'great gain', since operations

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24. JP(40) 139 Mtg 25 Nov 40, CAB 84/2.

25. COS to C-in-C Mediterranean 0332/28 Nov 40, PREM 3/507.

could be better conducted from Malta. Holding the island would create yet another supply problem, particularly as the small, fast ships needed to use its harbour were simply not available. Moreover, the naval resources were already overstrained in trying to cover trans-Mediterranean, Greek, and local convoys, and there was a real danger that the ability to conduct offensive naval actions would be rapidly diminished. Pantelleria would also require strong air defences at a time when there was a chronic shortage of air defence equipment throughout both the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern theatres. It was consequently extremely difficult to justify diverting any equipment for Pantelleria. Cunningham added that, while he fully appreciated the 'step forward' towards offensive action demonstrated by WORKSHOP, 'backed by the necessary personnel and material for which we have all been waiting for so long', he would much prefer to employ the forces against the 'decisive point' of the Dodecanese, starting with the smaller islands of Stampalia and Scarnanto.<sup>26</sup>

The COS questioned Cunningham's description of the Dodecanese as the 'decisive point' in the Mediterranean. In pre-war appreciations, and in the Anglo-Turkish military conventions, it had been assumed that they would be a much greater thorn in the Allied side than they had in fact proved to be. The COS consequently told Cunningham that, 'in present circumstances and in view of the Italians' failure to make effective use of their position in the Dodecanese we do not fully appreciate strategical arguments for capturing the islands by assault'.<sup>27</sup> The COS also felt that Cunning-

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26. C-in-C Mediterranean to Admiralty 1319/29 Nov 40, PREM 3/507.

27. COS to C-in-Cs Mediterranean and Middle East 30 Nov 40, PREM 3/124/2.



ham had not fully appreciated that he would obtain the Glens and  
 commandos regardless of whether or not WORKSHOP was actually carried  
 out.<sup>28</sup> On 1 December 1940 Cunningham backed down slightly, admitting  
 that the word 'decisive' might have been too strong. He nevertheless  
 maintained that an operation against the Dodecanese 'would contribute<sup>29</sup>  
 a great deal more to winning the war' than one against Pantelleria.

The success of the current British offensive in North Africa  
 and the establishment of the fleet at Suda Bay in Crete were making  
 Churchill much more optimistic about the general Mediterranean situa-  
 tion. He thus sought bolder operations than MANDIBLES, and requested  
 staff studies to find alternatives. The COS, considering this demand,  
 thought that it was not feasible, given the information available in  
 London, to make useful suggestions for amphibious operations on  
 the coast of North Africa. They therefore told Churchill that they<sup>30</sup>  
 were unable to provide the requested studies. Churchill had just  
 noted that he took it 'as settled' that WORKSHOP would leave on<sup>31</sup>  
 schedule. The COS hastened to explain to him that Cunningham's  
 objections, which he had not yet seen, indicated that even WORKSHOP  
 was far from definite. They were to meet Keyes the following day  
 to discuss the plan, after which they would be prepared to advise  
 Churchill as to whether or not the operation should be carried out.  
 Churchill took the night to study Cunningham's messages himself, and  
 indicated that he would personally review the situation with both  
 them and Keyes.

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28. Admiralty to C-in-C Mediterranean 1848/1 Dec 40, PREM 3/507.

29. C-in-C Mediterranean to Admiralty 0035/2 Dec 40, PREM 3/507.

30. COS(40) 29 Mtg (0) 2 Dec 40, CAB 79/55.

31. Churchill to Ismay 1 Dec 40, PREM 3/361/6.

The COS, with Keyes and Hornby, met Churchill on the morning of 3 December 1940. Keyes still had only the outline plans for WORKSHOP and Pound, who had not attended the previous meetings on the operation, had some misgivings about the adequacy of the forces involved. A decision on the military feasibility of WORKSHOP was therefore postponed until Keyes could present the detailed plans, but it was agreed that Force 103 should proceed to the Mediterranean irrespective of whether or not WORKSHOP was approved. The alternative of MANDIBLES, desired by Cunningham, was then considered, but Churchill persisted in his opposition to it. It was a larger operation, requiring at least two brigades - eventually the use of a division was planned - and would take a longer time to mount and conduct. WORKSHOP and MANDIBLES were thus not, in Churchill's view, equatable, and he could still see no reason why they could not be executed sequentially. Churchill's support was welcomed by Keyes, who saw an operation that had twice been agreed upon being left once more in limbo. It was finally accepted that priority should be given to WORKSHOP. Consensus was also reached that, in any event, raids on the Italian coastline would prove useful, and plans and preparations for these were also to be worked on.<sup>32</sup>

Churchill then wrote a personal telegram to Cunningham emphasising his support for WORKSHOP and attempting to deal with some of Cunningham's apprehensions. The COS saw this before it was despatched, and asked Ismay to hold it up until they could again discuss WORKSHOP with Churchill. It was apparent that there was still, in almost all respects, a wide divergence of opinion between Churchill



and his professional advisers. In writing the telegram, Churchill had inferred that the COS has recommended that WORKSHOP be undertaken. This was not the position as the COS saw it. They were still concerned about the adequacy of the forces employed and a possible shortage of naval escorts. They therefore requested that any messages sent to Cunningham should not give the impression that they had studied and endorsed the final plan. They also stated that both Pound and Dill wanted to see Churchill privately on the question of Keyes' commanding the operation. They had not known of this when the operation was approved in principle on 19 November 1940, and were obviously unhappy about it. This feeling was shared by Cunningham when he heard of it. The COS also questioned Churchill's assertions that the 'joint staffs here consider very high value attaches to removal of this obstruction to East-West communications'. They declared that neither they nor the JPS had ever rated the value of Pantelleria quite so high. The Naval Staff in particular had never considered that the island had to be seriously taken into account when passing ships through the Narrows.

The difference of opinion was hammered out at a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting during the night of 5 December 1940. The COS had spoken to Keyes earlier that day about the detailed plans, and remained concerned about the problems of the landing and the adequacy of the force. Although they 'fully appreciated' the need to seize every chance of taking the offensive, they saw it as their duty to report 'frankly' their estimate of the situation.

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33. Churchill to Ismay 3 Dec 40 and Ismay to Churchill 4 Dec 40, PREM 3/507.

They did not think that surprise could be counted on. The number of destroyers needed for an adequate escort meant some would have to be withdrawn from home waters, and this in itself would pose unacceptable problems. Churchill was not at all pleased to hear these arguments. He considered them overcautious, and he reminded the COS that there was never 'an absolute guarantee of success in war', nor could fully adequate forces ever be provided. It was admittedly out of the question to denude home waters of destroyers to the extent demanded, but, he pointed out, this would equally apply to Cunningham's favoured alternative of MANDIBLES. There would thus be no prospect at all of an offensive operation in the Mediterranean for some time to come. As the need for some form of raiding operations to be carried out in the Mediterranean in the near future was generally accepted by the COS, Churchill, reluctant to abandon what he had always considered a worthwhile operation, requested the COS to determine if the WORKSHOP plan could be improved to the extent needed to gain their approval. Other plans for the employment of Force 103 were simultaneously to be prepared, as the force in any event would sail with EXCESS.

Keyes and Haydon spent the night of 7 December at Chequers, urging their plan on Churchill. The criticism of his plan at the 5 December meeting as 'immature and sketchy' had irked Keyes.

In 1918 I was given an absolutely free hand to organise a much larger and far more hazardous operation, and it never occurred to me that, once the command of the expedition was confided to me, I would be expected to produce a detailed plan to be criticised by the comparatively junior staff officers, who I knew were responsible for



making these suggestions to the COS.

In respect to the controversy about planning, the service departments were being overly critical. The Admiralty planning section had lent Captain C.S. Daniel to Keyes for WORKSHOP. Daniel later noted that 'Roger Keyes was in no sense a paper man, he disliked paper and administrative work of all sorts, but he usually took care to have a good staff on whom he placed implicit trust to do this work'. Although Daniel had some doubts himself about the strategic necessity for WORKSHOP, he defended the operation as a sound military proposition.

Cunningham was not to be moved. On 9 December 1940 he sent a message that the arrival of the commandos and the assault shipping, whether WORKSHOP was executed or not, would be too late to exploit any successes gained in the Western Desert. He could thus not foresee any suitable targets on the North African coast for the force to attack. He therefore re-iterated his view that the most profitable employment for the force would be an attack of Stampalia, the headquarters of the Italians in the Dodecanese. Cunningham also added an additional argument. He had consulted Wavell, and presented their joint view that, as a general principle, it was highly undesirable to conduct an operation directly from the United Kingdom without prior consultation and coordination with the theatre commanders concerned. He emphasised that combined operations needed more careful and detailed planning than any other type, and that the details should be worked out together by those responsible for the execution

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35. Keyes, 'History of WORKSHOP' 7 Dec 40, DEFE 2/698.

36. Unpublished Memoirs of Admiral C.S. Daniel held in Churchill College, Cambridge, p.213.

and for the support and maintenance of the project.

A further meeting of the Defence Committee (Operations), with Keyes, Hornby, Haydon, and Knox present, was held on the evening of 9 December 1940. Keyes had met the COS earlier that day, and had been granted some additional forces for WORKSHOP. As the Dutch LSI(M) could not be converted in time, the Royal Scotsman had been allocated from the BRISK force, along with some additional warships. The COS had then given the operation their qualified approval. Against this was the message just received from Cunningham. His case was weakened, however, by his failure to produce a viable alternative to WORKSHOP. It thus appeared to be WORKSHOP or nothing at all. The COS continued to vacillate in regard to the value of WORKSHOP. Whereas 'up to quite recently' it had not seemed that there was sufficient strategical justification for capturing and holding the island, it now appeared that, with the ascendancy gained over the Italian air force, Cunningham was inclined to take convoys, including merchant ships, through the Narrows by day and not by night. This would greatly ease the shipping problem, and a fighter airfield at Pantelleria would, in this event, provide some worthwhile cover. Its usefulness as a base for naval forces, however, would still remain negligible.

The COS invariably expressed doubts about the plan. It might not be possible to get more than the first flight of 1,600 lightly armed men ashore. The size of the Italian garrison, as well as the extent of the beach defences, was still not known. Surprise was

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37. C-in-C Mediterranean to Admiralty 1513/9 Dec 40, Annex to DO(40) 49 Mtg 9 Dec 40, CAB 69/1.



considered unlikely. Overall, the COS judged the chances against success to be three to one. Nevertheless, if the political risk of failure could be accepted, and if Cunningham was satisfied that he could accept the subsequent maintenance commitment, they agreed that the operation should take place. As it was already clear that Cunningham was opposed to the maintenance commitment, this was not a very great concession, and Churchill saw it as yet another example of overcautious procrastination. He remarked that the original objection to WORKSHOP, the shortage of destroyers, had now not even been mentioned, and he was presented instead with the argument that the chances of success were poor. He personally could not accept the odds quoted, and did not accept it as a valid argument. It was impossible, in his opinion, for anyone to assess the precise chances of success in any military enterprise. The battle in Libya was then going well, and the capture of Pantelleria, besides providing a valuable air base, would further shake Italian morale. Churchill therefore pressed for the execution of WORKSHOP, assuring the COS that he would be the first one to cancel it if, at the time of execution, it did not fit in 'harmoniously' with the strategic plan. The committee thereupon agreed to the plan for WORKSHOP as outlined, approving the completion of the preparations for it and the sailing of Force 103 with EXCESS. WORKSHOP, subject to a Defence Committee (Operations) cancellation, would be carried out providing weather conditions were favourable and surprise could be obtained.<sup>38</sup>

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38. DO(40) 49 Mtg 9 Dec 40, CAB 69/1 and COS(40) 420 Mtg 9 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.

The JPS were instructed to examine and report on the evacuation of the raiding force after the capture of the island, on the size of the garrison required to fulfill the strategic aim, on the administrative arrangements required, and on the notification to be given to the other relevant commanders in the Mediterranean and Middle East.<sup>39</sup> British successes in these theatres had led the JPS, at the same time, to work on the policy to be followed in the event of an Italian collapse.

The final decision on WORKSHOP was sent to Cunningham on 9 December 1940. He insisted, in a message the next morning, that WORKSHOP should be called off, not so much because of the strategic arguments against it, but because of the logistics problems it would create. As he was still aware of nothing 'more than the object of operation and forces to be employed', he would not argue against it on the grounds of feasibility, but he was still troubled by the subsequent maintenance commitment, particularly in regard to supplies for the civilian population, the provision of suitable supply ships, and the provision of adequate cover for the supply operations. He placed the onus for these squarely on the planners in London, with the comment 'I assume those responsible for this plan have considered question of supply and I request I may be informed of the results of their study'. He was 'reluctant to seem to be making difficulties', but he considered the resources of the Mediterranean Fleet stretched to their utmost, and if the capture of Pantelleria was to be considered he would require reinforcements. As it was, during the execution of EXCESS and WORKSHOP all movement of supplies

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39. COS(40) 422 Mtg 10 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.



to Greece and Crete and into the Western Desert would have to cease.

The Admiralty replied that, if the passage of the Narrows could be made by day by trade as well as by troop convoys, the shipping situation would be substantially easier, and Pantelleria would prove<sup>41</sup> valuable in this respect. Churchill, concerned about Cunningham's reluctance, sent him a message stating that the whole matter of WORKSHOP had been considered 'exhaustively', and that 'Zeebrugge would never have got past scrutiny bestowed on this'. He went on to give all the reasons for his confidence in WORKSHOP, which would, after all, be conducted against 'Italian sedentary troops, not Germans'. The strategic advantages were recounted, but Churchill's main concern was revealed in his remark that 'we need it to show ourselves capable of vehement offensive amphibious action'. Churchill then tackled MANDIBLES. He was opposed to starting operations against the smaller islands until the time was ripe for the immediate follow-up by major operations against the larger ones. Unless this were done the minor operations would only 'stir up' the area without any important reward. This was the same reason for his objections to many of the small raids on the Continent. Churchill also explained that there were diplomatic problems with Greece and Turkey. Capture of the Dodecanese would<sup>42</sup> raise awkward problems as to their ultimate ownership. Cunningham, though privately unconvinced, finally accented WORKSHOP, and on 12 December 1940 sent his assurance that the 'utmost endeavour would be<sup>43</sup> made by the Mediterranean Fleet to ensure success'.

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40. C-in-C Mediterranean to Admiralty 0053/10 Dec 40, PREM 3/507

41. Admiralty to C-in-C Mediterranean 0219/10 Dec 40, PREM 3/507.

42. PM to C-in-C Mediterranean 2145/11 Dec 40, PREM 3/507.

43. C-in-C Mediterranean to Admiralty 1245/12 Dec 40, PREM 3/507.

Arrangements for the garrisoning of Pantelleria were also being finalised. The JPS had reduced their estimate to 2,000 men, including the personnel for the anti-aircraft defences, which would initially be provided from the garrison to Malta. These would be in addition to one Special Service battalion now planned to remain on the island. The garrison would come under the command of the Governor and C-in-C of Malta, and the detailed planning of the installation and maintenance<sup>44</sup> of the garrison would be his responsibility.

After a month and a half of haggling, WORKSHOP was now definite. This was to change almost immediately, however. On 13 December 1940 the Spanish assumed complete control of the International Zone at Tangier. Churchill feared that, as the British situation in the eastern Mediterranean improved, the Germans might take some action in the western end, either in collusion with Spain or by an independent coup. The Spanish action at Tangier at first looked 'suspiciously' like the former. Discussions were held at Chequers on 14 December 1940. Churchill's reaction was that the British were at the moment 'crouched', but that if EXCESS and WORKSHOP were undertaken they would become 'sprawled'. The situation in the Western Desert was such that EXCESS was not essential. Attention turned to the contingency plans for the Atlantic islands; TRUCK was ready, but if WORKSHOP were undertaken BRISK could not be remounted. It therefore seemed more desirable to retain the available troops, assault shipping, and naval escort for any counter-moves the British might care to take, rather than commit them to WORKSHOP.

Halifax did not share this concern, as he had been advised

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44. COS(40) 47 (0)(JP) 'Operation WORKSHOP' 13 Dec 40, CAB 80/106.



through diplomatic channels that the Spanish action was more likely the result of Spanish nationalism rather than an Axis plot. He believed that Franco and the Spanish army were not anxious to enter the war, but cautioned that any British move contrary to Spanish interests would probably have the undesirable effect of pushing Spain towards the Axis. Churchill therefore agreed that no move against Spanish or Portuguese territory should be made until the situation was clarified. Meanwhile, however, he agreed that the British should take steps to meet any contingency. All present, including Keyes, therefore concluded that EXCESS and WORKSHOP should be suspended, thus freeing the resources involved for possible operations in the Atlantic or western Mediterranean.<sup>45</sup>

The dearth of viable options for operations in the western Mediterranean, along with the importance of the stores in EXCESS for the continuance of operations in the eastern Mediterranean, soon raised the question as to whether it might in fact be possible to carry out EXCESS after all. There were both advantages and disadvantages to this, and on 16 December 1940 the Defence Committee (Operations) decided that EXCESS should sail in December. Churchill, however, still wanted a force to counter a German initiative in the western Mediterranean. No great disadvantage was seen in postponing WORKSHOP until the January 1941 moon period, and it was therefore considered best to keep Force 103 in the United Kingdom to continue training, rather than letting it sail with EXCESS.<sup>46</sup>

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45. COS(40) 32 Mtg (0) and COS(40) 33 Mtg (0) 14 Dec 40, CAB 79/55.

46. DO(40) 50 Mtg 16 Dec 40, CAB 69/1. See also COS(40) 423 Mtg 16 Dec 40, CAB 79/8; COS(40) 49 (0) 'Operations GRIND and HUMOUR' 15 Dec 40, CAB 80/106; and COS(40) 32 'Operations in the Western Mediterranean' 16 Dec 40, CAB 80/56.

Keyes was, not surprisingly, unhappy with this postponement. Although he could see the necessity of delaying WORKSHOP until the situation regarding Spain had been clarified, he thought it 'very unwise to leave such a splendid striking force and shining sword to rust and lost its temper in the Highlands when all the alternative objectives such as WORKSHOP, GRIND, BRISK, ALLOY, SHRAPNEL lie east and west of the Straits.'<sup>47</sup> It would take about 7 days for Force 103 to reach Gibraltar, by which time the situation should have been sorted out. The British could then strike first rather than, as had happened so often before, leave the initiative to the Germans. Keyes re-emphasised the strategic value of Pantelleria, and asked for a personal interview with Churchill to discuss his ideas.<sup>48</sup> When he was turned down, he tried a number of other people, including the Foreign Secretary and the First Lord of the Admiralty, all to no avail. Churchill finally saw Keyes, but refused to change his position. Keyes was concerned about the effect the delays were having on the morale of the Special Service troops. He began to think that the opposition to WORKSHOP was centered around him personally, and even offered to withdraw as DCO if it would help Churchill pursue a more aggressive policy. As Keyes could see that staying in London was a 'pure waste of time', he then returned to Scotland to oversee the training of Force 103.

The postponement of WORKSHOP had in some ways been advantageous, as the force's training had been seriously curtailed by bad weather and some equipment had been damaged. Keyes recognised this after a

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47. GRIND was a possible operation to seize Tangier.

48. Keyes to Churchill 17 Dec 40, PREM 3/330/7. See Ismay to Keyes 17 Dec 40, K 140/3/1.



short period in Scotland, and admitted that the delay was possibly<sup>49</sup> for the best - if the Germans did not act first. He was extremely happy, almost invigorated, in working with the commandos, and he planned to stay in Scotland for three weeks until WORKSHOP was again mounted. His letters mellowed as his confidence waxed, and he requested that the decision be taken to launch WORKSHOP in time for<sup>50</sup> the force to reach Pantelleria by 22 January 1941.

In London Hornby was running the COHQ. Throughout this period he attempted to have two of the Glens, with a Special Service battalion each, and possibly a Royal Scotsman class ship for a force headquarters, released for operations in the Mediterranean. He argued that, with the one Glen ship allocated to BRISK, the British would still be 'crouched'. Hornby informed Keyes on 22 December 1940 that if he asked for the release of any more, the normal 'argy-bargy' would commence, since the Admiralty opposition to WORKSHOP had not flagged. The Dutch LSI(M) were at the time not included in the force because their conversion had been delayed, and when they were completed they would be required for training in the United Kingdom. It was expected that both they and the third Glen ship would be able to join the force in the Mediterranean in February 1941, thus fulfilling the assault<sup>51</sup> shipping portion of the COS programme of 23 September 1940.

On 16 December 1940, Wavell sent a joint telegram emphasising the urgency of capturing the Dodecanese. As it appeared that the war might break out in the Balkans in the spring of 1941, the importance

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49. The condition of the forces at this time are reflected in a note to Churchill 18 Dec 40, PREM 3/330/7 and DCO to Admiralty for COS 0530/20 Dec 40, DEFE 2/613.

50. Keyes to Churchill 22 Dec 40, K 140/3/1.

51. Hornby to Keyes 22 Dec 40, K 13/25.

of these islands had increased. Air and naval units operating from there would constitute a serious threat to the lines of communication to Greece and Turkey, which were vital for any major operations in the Balkans, including attacks on the Romanian oil fields. Even now these lines of communications were causing a 'serious waste of effort' by the demand for strong escort forces. Wavell ascribed the failure of the Italians to use the islands more effectively to this strong British escort, provided at the expense of other operations. With German forces in the Dodecanese the situation would become much worse. He therefore intended to adopt the 'nibbling' policy of taking the smaller islands first, in conjunction with commando raids. The grip on the main islands would thus be tightened, and they might eventually fall without a major operation. As far as the political objections were concerned, he thought that the British should seize the islands before Turkish intervention could further complicate matters.

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The situation in the Dodecanese was reviewed by the COS on 20 December 1940. They admitted that they were impressed by the force of Wavell's arguments, and agreed that plans for the capture of the Dodecanese should be prepared 'forthwith', on the assumptions that the operations were to be carried out only with the forces and landing craft already in the Middle East, or else with the addition of the commandos and assault shipping earmarked for WORKSHOP. The Foreign Office was asked to consider the effect of the operations on Greek and Turkish relations.

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Churchill noted these steps on 27

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52. COS(40) 1035 'Dodecanese' 16 Dec 40, CAB 80/24.

53. COS(40) 1051 'The Dodecanese' 20 Dec 40, CAB 80/24.



December 1940.

Opposition to WORKSHOP continued in the COS. On 23 December 1940 it was agreed that WORKSHOP depended on the cover of a convoy for a surprise, and without this cover the operation would be prejudiced. The proposition was then put forward that the C-in-Cs Middle East and Mediterranean would undoubtedly find a force of Special Service troops, together with two or three LSI, most useful early in 1941. The JPS were therefore instructed to report on the next possible opportunity for WORKSHOP, together with a study of the assault shipping available.<sup>55</sup>

The JPS had already been working on a report of their own, in which they accepted Hornby's proposal of sending two Glen ships to the Middle East. They stressed, however, the need to get the ships out to the Mediterranean, and were less interested in the execution of WORKSHOP. They suggested that the force could go through the Mediterranean with the projected January convoy, LANDFALL, or that it could sail around the Cape at the earliest opportunity. The latter was considered a more certain method of ensuring their arrival.<sup>56</sup> The COS deferred a decision on this on 24 December 1940, however, until the CNS could present an Admiralty paper being prepared on the subject.<sup>57</sup>

Keyes continued to send Churchill optimistic forecasts on WORKSHOP. Although the force was restricted to the Isle of Arran, Keyes

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54. Ismay to Churchill 27 Dec 40, PREM 3/124/2.

55. COS(40) 436 Mtg 23 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.

56. COS(40) 52 (0)(JP) 'Allocation of the Glen Ships' 23 Dec 40, CAB 80/106.

57. COS(40) 437 Mtg 24 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.

sent Churchill's son Randolph, then serving with the commandos in the force, home for Christmas on the pretext of carrying an official despatch. Randolph was expected to help the cause. These efforts began to have an effect on Churchill, and on 26 December 1940 he told Ismay that he was 'becoming increasingly convinced of the need and urgency of WORKSHOP'. He thereupon demanded proposals for carrying it out before mid-February. His continued personal interest in the operation is evident in a note to Ismay in which he stated that, as there was now time to prepare fully the operation, the commandos might therefore be issued with four 3" mortars for support.<sup>58</sup>

Pound presented the COS with the Admiralty view on Mediterranean operations on 28 December 1940, according to Keyes, 'in order to provide fresh arguments to sabotage WORKSHOP'.<sup>59</sup> The number of destroyers required for either WORKSHOP or LANDFALL, or both, was such that, if the operations were carried out in January, the North West Approaches to the United Kingdom would be left dangerously weak. Additional destroyers would not be in service with the Home Fleet until February 1941. It therefore appeared best to cancel LANDFALL. The ships which comprised this convoy could join the convoy leaving the United Kingdom about 27 January 1941, sailing via the Cape. Pound further proposed that Force 103 should sail independently about 7 January 1941, via the Cape, and then conduct WORKSHOP from the eastern end of the Mediterranean. This could be done by 14 February 1941, thus fulfilling Churchill's conditions. This option of conducting the operation from the other end of the Mediterranean had not been considered before,

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58. Churchill to Ismay 26 Dec 40, PREM 3/507. For follow-on see Hollis to Churchill 30 Dec 40 and Churchill to Hollis 3 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

59. COS(40) 34 Mtg (0) 28 Dec 40, CAB 79/55.



but it would have some advantages. The naval arrangements would be easier, and the operation could afford to wait for favourable weather. Surprise could just as easily be achieved. Faced with this situation, the COS agreed to recommend Pound's proposals to Churchill.

Churchill thought that while either course of action would get the LANDFALL troops to the Middle East at approximately the same time, he preferred to pass them through the Mediterranean in March 1941. This would keep the troops available in the United Kingdom for a longer period of time, and reduce the 'waste period' of the voyage. He also favoured it because 'the passing of troops through the Mediterranean must be held steadily in view as an object of importance, which the Admiralty should seek persistently to achieve'. He would not countenance the WORKSHOP force sailing around the Cape, 'as once the force arrived in the Eastern Mediterranean it would be practically certain to be used for MANDIBLES instead of WORKSHOP; whereas I am hoping it can be used for both'. He therefore preferred that the force should go through the Mediterranean with the re-scheduled LANDFALL in March. Unlike the COS, he could see no reason why WORKSHOP could not be sent earlier, on its own. He reiterated the importance of the operation, as 'constant reflection has made me feel the very high value of WORKSHOP'. The effect of the operation would be 'electrifying', and would 'greatly increase our strategic hold upon the Central Mediterranean'.<sup>60</sup>

Pound accepted the points raised by Churchill, but insisted that the governing factor was nevertheless the destroyer shortage.

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60. Churchill to Ismay 28 Dec 40, PREM 3/507.

He therefore secured Churchill's assent to the despatch of the former LANDFALL troops around the Cape with the convoy leaving on 27 January 1941. WORKSHOP would sail for the Mediterranean about 14 February 1941, enabling the operation to be carried out in the early March moon<sup>61</sup> period.

Keyes, upon learning of this decision on 30 December 1940, thought it 'imperative that the SS troops not be kept waiting until the middle<sup>62</sup> of February'. In this case he would even prefer Pound's earlier suggestion of sailing the force around the Cape immediately, and conducting WORKSHOP from the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Haydon protested, that, if WORKSHOP was postponed until February, 'an entirely new situation' would arise. The frustration of the commandos was becoming intense. The first postponement, together with the news of the successes in Libya, had already led to a number of requests for transfer from men who, feeling that they had as good, if not better, a chance of action with their original units than with the Special Service Brigade, now wanted to take advantage of the commando joining condition which allowed them to return to their original units at their own discretion. Further delay would only result in a greater deterioration of morale. Haydon was 'of the opinion that the whole question of the continued existence of Special Service units will<sup>63</sup> require review' if WORKSHOP was postponed again. The situation was exacerbated by shipping problems. The Royal Scotsman had by now been added to the force from BRISK, and Keyes was asking for the Karanja. The constant changing of the shipping allocated to the force

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61. COS(40) 37 (0) 'Operations LANDFALL and WORKSHOP' 29 Dec 40, CAB 80/56.

62. 'History of Events of the Last Few Days' 30 Dec 40, K 13/5.

63. Haydon to Keyes 30 Dec 40, K 13/5.



and the lack of a definite sailing date caused many difficulties. Haydon had complained that it was 'impossible to load ships correctly; to allot definite tasks; to issue complete and final operation orders; or to lay down a proper training programme based on the time factor', adding that 'it seems a sad commentary that we have never had here at one and the same time all the ships each with its own stores on board'.<sup>64</sup>

Keyes returned immediately from Scotland to place his case for sailing the force on 7 January 1941 around the Cape before the COS. The COS agreed to support this proposal at their first meeting on 31 December 1940. The sailing of the EXCESS convoy had by this time been delayed three weeks owing to the need to give priority to operations in support of the campaign in the Western Desert. The COS also considered sailing WORKSHOP with the delayed EXCESS, which had simultaneously occurred to Churchill, but the Admiralty again declared this unacceptable owing to the destroyer shortage.<sup>65</sup> Churchill sat in on the second meeting of the COS on 31 December 1940 to consider the recommendation to send Force 103 around the Cape, one of the only recommendations on which both Keyes and the COS were agreed. Churchill was adamant, however, that Force 103 should be held in the United Kingdom for contingency purposes, and the earlier decision to sail WORKSHOP through the Mediterranean in mid-February 1941 was upheld.<sup>66</sup>

During his meeting with the COS, Keyes was not aware of the actual sailing date of the delayed EXCESS. He had not pressed for the sailing of WORKSHOP with EXCESS, because he was under the impression that

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64. Haydon to Keyes 28 Dec 40, K 13/5.

65. COS(40) 35 Mtg (0) 31 Dec 40, CAB 79/55.

66. COS(40) 441 Mtg 31 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.

the convoy would sail at the end of January, and he wanted action taken sooner than that. When he learned on 3 January 1941 that EXCESS was leaving at the beginning of the month, he drafted a memorandum for the COS pressing for the inclusion of WORKSHOP in the EXCESS convoy, an alternative which, unknown to him, the COS had already rejected. In the memorandum he expressed his fears that a long delay in mounting the operation might give the Germans time to make a move which could render WORKSHOP impracticable - 'We must not be forestalled!' He had investigated the maintenance problem with Haydon, and he concluded that 'unnecessarily heavy weather' was being made of the difficulties. He evidently did not expect to secure much support, for he concluded by asking that, if the COS accepted the risk of German forestallment, and would not let WORKSHOP sail in January, Force 103 should be granted 7 days leave.

Keyes enclosed this memorandum with a letter to Churchill, written in far stronger language. He explained that he thought the Naval Staff's contentions on the destroyer issue were 'absurd', and 'would not stand up to investigation'. 'The folly of the Naval Staff's procrastination is tormenting', he added. He admitted that he was being a 'damned nuisance', but he had always been impelled 'to fight the King's enemies and among those - incidentally also your<sup>67</sup> enemies - I regard those who are wilfully obstructing WORKSHOP'.

Ismay replied on Churchill's behalf. As EXCESS was leaving almost immediately, there was no time to incorporate WORKSHOP within it, and thus no purpose would be served by forwarding the memorandum to

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67. Keyes to COS 3 Jan 41 and Keyes to Churchill 3 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.



the COS. Ismay noted that, in any event, Churchill, 'quite apart from any reasons put forward by the Naval Staff', was not prepared to let Force 103 leave the country. Its usefulness in the event of a crisis with Spain still appeared to be the deciding factor. In an effort to bolster the morale of the commandos, Ismay added that Churchill would like to visit them towards the end of January. 68

On 6 January 1941 the COS decided not to remount BRISK. Although the disposition of the third Glen ship was not laid down, Keyes thereafter assumed that it was part of his force, as had been intended in September 1940. The force now comprised the three Glens, the Royal Scotsman, and the Karanja. This would enable three Special Service battalions to be embarked for WORKSHOP, plus elements of two further Commandos for other raiding operations. The Special Service troops were given leave from 13 to 28 January 1941, after which they would have two weeks to train before the new sailing date. 69

While these decisions were being made in London, Wavell, on being given authority on 20 December 1940 for planning operations against the Dodecanese, apparently took it as the approval of his plan for first attacking the smaller islands. In a telegram to the War Office on 26 December 1940 he indicated that raids on some of the smaller islands by locally raised commandos should commence as soon as arrangements could be made. While the plans for the capture of the larger islands would be drawn up, their implementation would probably await the arrival of the assault shipping. On 30 December 1940 he presumed that it was advisable to inform the Greek and Turkish governments of

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68. Ismay to Keyes 5 Jan 41, PREM 3/507 and Keyes to Ismay 7 Jan 41, K 140/3/1.

69. War Dairy of SS Brigade Jan 41, DEFE 2/54 and COS(41) 11 (0) (Revise) 'Operation WORKSHOP' 16 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.

the proposed British action against the smaller islands. On 5 January 1941 the War Office replied that it was inadvisable to tell the Turks, though the Greeks could be informed through military channels.<sup>70</sup>

Churchill saw these telegrams and questioned them, as he had not approved any operations in the Dodecanese, and was still opposed to the policy of striking the smaller islands before the major assaults were ready. Ismay advised Churchill that the word 'intentions' used by Wavell was inappropriate.<sup>71</sup> Churchill, on 13 January 1941, nevertheless wrote to the COS reiterating his opposition to attacks on the smaller islands. They were neither necessary for the assault on the larger islands, nor were they necessary to defend Crete. 'Stirring up' this quarter would only put the enemy on his guard, and lead to disagreement between Greece and Turkey. He pointedly remarked that the Defence Committee (Operations) had not authorised any such action.<sup>72</sup>

Cunningham had his sights set on the Dodecanese, which, with the increasing probability of a German attack upon Greece, he now considered of very great importance. On 14 January 1941 he requested the immediate despatch of at least two Glens and their complements via the Cape, to pose a threat to the enemy in the Dodecanese, and enable the British to take advantage of any other fleeting opportunities. He also mentioned that the first sea-borne raid in the Dodecanese would take place in the next few days. Such raids would

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70. COS(41) 9 (0) 'Attack on the Dodecanese' 13 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.

71. Ismay to Churchill 8 Jan 41, PREM 3/124/2.

72. Churchill to Ismay 13 Jan 41, PREM 3/124/2.



continue but, for lack of the necessary modern landing material,  
 they could only be 'pin-pricks'.<sup>73</sup>

The COS did not receive Churchill's minute, which had been held up pending a JPS report on future Mediterranean strategy, and Cunningham's telegram until 16 January 1941. They telegraphed Cunningham concerning the undesirability of stirring up the Dodecanese before a policy and a programme for the capture of the islands had been settled.<sup>74</sup> By the time Cunningham received this, a small expedition had already left on a raid. The question of whether to continue the raid or to cancel it was referred back to London, and the COS raised the matter with Churchill. After consultation with the Foreign Secretary,<sup>75</sup> Churchill ordered the recall of the raiding force.

The situation in the Mediterranean changed dramatically in the early part of January 1941, when German air force units arrived in Sicily. This increased Churchill's fear of the Germans establishing themselves on Pantelleria, as Keyes had warned from the outset, which would mean a complete closure of the Narrows. Churchill therefore called for WORKSHOP to be reviewed, as it had become 'more urgent and at the same time more difficult'. If the Germans increased their activity, he foresaw that the operation might become impossible. He remained 'completely of the opinion that WORKSHOP is cardinal', and pressed for it to be launched at the earliest moment.<sup>76</sup> The operation was accordingly reviewed at a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting

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73. C-in-C Mediterranean to Admiralty 2009/14 Jan 41, PREM 3/309/1.

74. COS(41) 20 Mtg 16 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.

75. COS(41) 23 Mtg 18 Jan 41, CAB 79/8

76. COS(41) 8 (0) 'Mediterranean Situation' 13 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.

on 13 January 1941. The feasibility of the plan was considered in the light of the new circumstances, and Keyes was invited to speak to the COS about it the following day.<sup>77</sup>

During the meeting with the COS on 14 January 1941, Keyes was asked to prepare a report in answer to the Defence Committee's question as to whether the plan should be modified and, if so, how. The Admiralty was simultaneously asked to determine, in consultation with Cunningham, what the timing of the operation should be, given the likely weather conditions and other naval plans. After Keyes' report had been received the JPS would then recommend whether, in view of the changing situation in the Mediterranean, WORKSHOP should be undertaken at all.<sup>78</sup>

Keyes submitted his report on 16 January 1941. In his opinion WORKSHOP was still practicable, although the forces would have to be slightly augmented. Keyes was working on the assumption that three Special Service battalions could be used, carried in the three Glens, along with the other Commandos in the Royal Scotsman and Karanja. His estimate of the earliest possible date for the operation was now some time between 20 and 28 February 1941.<sup>79</sup> The EPS issued concurrently a report on the garrison and maintenance requirements. The general thrust of their arguments mirrored that of Cunningham's. The worst possible case was again assumed. The estimate of size of the garrison required had more than doubled, to 5,000. Maintenance difficulties were forecast because of the problems of unloading without a proper

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77. DO(41) 4 Mtg 13 Jan 41, CAB 69/2.

78. COS(41) 17 Mtg 14 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.

79. COS(41) 11 (0) (Revise) 'Operation WORKSHOP' 16 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.



escort, and dependence on calm weather to do so; the danger of air attack throughout the operation and the impracticability of providing adequate fighter protection; the danger from mines and submarines, and the necessity for strong surface ship cover. The authors of the paper also questioned the strategic necessity for capturing the island, and concluded that it would impose so heavy a burden on the Mediterranean Fleet that it would curtail its  
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offensive capabilities.

A copy of this report fell into Keyes' hands, and, not unexpectedly, he was enraged by its contents. He termed it a 'smoke screen of potential difficulties. The shining goal is lost sight of by its dismal authors'. The principal obstructionist, in his opinion, was the naval member of the EPS, Captain G. French, RN. Keyes pointed out to Churchill that he had suggested WORKSHOP on 29 October 1940, that on 2 November 1940 the COS had considered it a most important objective and directed that preparations be made to capture the island, and that on 19 November 1940 Churchill,  
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three ministers, and the COS had unanimously approved it.

Churchill agreed, and Ismay was forced to explain that the EPS report was merely the advice tendered to the JPS by the section of the planning organisation that was responsible for studying the problems of escorts, transportation, and maintenance. Ismay declared that 'they had no business to digress into problems of high strategy, or into the question of the practicability or otherwise of WORKSHOP, nor should their report have been circulated to anybody except their immediate chiefs, i.e. the JPS'. The latter part of

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80. EPS(41) 147 'Operation WORKSHOP' 16 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

81. Keyes to Churchill 17 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

this statement is a revealing one, for it serves to indicate why Keyes was so upset over the opposition to his projects by lower-ranking officers, given a system which did not allow him full access to their criticisms. Churchill asked for the names of the officers of the EPS concerned, but by the time he was given them WORKSHOP had been cancelled, and Ismay tried to assuage him, admitting that he had been somewhat unfair to the EPS in his earlier note to Churchill. It was, he said, 'difficult to prescribe any exact frontier to their responsibilities'.<sup>82</sup>

The COS report on WORKSHOP, based on Keyes' report, the Admiralty report, and the EPS report, was completed on 18 January 1941. Keyes' memorandum was dismissed as being phrased only in 'very general terms' and thus not a detailed plan. In the COS view, the inclusion of the third Glen ship and the Karanja would commit all the assault shipping then available: 'at a time when they are urgently required elsewhere'. This requirement was not further explained, and it is difficult to ascertain what possible operation the COS had in mind. The Admiralty report pointed out that WORKSHOP would require forces from home waters in such numbers as to cause a serious reduction in the ability of the fleet to provide trade protection in the North West Approaches, as well as to defeat an invasion of the United Kingdom. The escort problems involved in the maintenance of Pantelleria, following the argument of the EPS, were such that the additional defensive burden could only be detrimental to the British offensive capability. The introduction of German dive bombers into Sicily had also greatly increased the risks. This EPS report was

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82. Ismay to Churchill 21 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.



accepted at face value. Given these difficulties, the COS then looked at the strategic implications. The deciding factor here was the arrival of the German air force. The provision of fighter cover for convoys and the disruption of Italian communications - the objects of a British attack on Pantelleria - required the free use of its airfield. The COS doubted, with the Germans in Sicily, that this was possible. Even if it were, the British could not adequately cover the whole passage of the Narrows. Pantelleria was considered to be of little use to the Germans, as adequate coverage was afforded them by bases in Sicily. The COS were 'therefore of the opinion that the strategic value of Pantelleria, either to ourselves or to the Germans, is, in reality, only slight'. They accordingly recommended that, as the risks and maintenance commitments 'could only be justified in achieving a strategic object of far greater value than the capture of Pantelleria', WORKSHOP be abandoned.<sup>83</sup> While their judgement must be accepted as valid, considering their central role in the formulation of strategy, this appears to be a curious reversal of many of the opinions they expressed during the planning of WORKSHOP. In fact, the COS, pushed in one direction by Churchill and Keyes, and in the other by the JPS and Cunningham, never really took a firm position on WORKSHOP. It was plain, however, that the hesitancy, procrastination, and in some places outright obstructionism, of the planning and decision-taking system had resulted in the very outcome that Keyes had predicted - a seizure of the initiative by the Germans.

The COS recommendations on WORKSHOP were echoed in their review

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83. COS(41) 13 (0) 'Operation WORKSHOP' 18 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.

of the whole policy in the Mediterranean on 18 January 1941. This repeated Cunningham's appreciation that MANDIBLES should be 'given high priority'. Other possible operations against Libya and Sicily were mentioned, and it was considered essential that the special shipping and assault craft which Cunningham had consistently demanded should be sent to the Eastern Mediterranean as soon as possible.<sup>84</sup>

These two reports were taken up at a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting on 20 January 1941. Churchill was unhappy about the COS recommendation on WORKSHOP, but he accepted the fact that the British had 'lost the chance' of capturing Pantelleria, and that with the changes that had taken place in the central Mediterranean it might never occur again. Keyes was to be informed by the COS of the decision to abandon WORKSHOP. He was also told by Ismay specifically that Churchill did not want to discuss the matter further.<sup>85</sup> The committee's attention then focused on the other projects in the Mediterranean (MANDIBLES being the major one), which required the despatch of assault shipping around the Cape. Churchill was not receptive to these proposals, and was 'firmly opposed to sending special troops to the Middle East, where they would pass out of our control'. The crux was that Churchill was determined to find an offensive operation, and the COS were not presenting him with any viable options. He finally consented to MANDIBLES, although he was not convinced that it was a satisfying object for the forces gathering in the Middle East. He preferred an attack on Sicily or

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84. COS(41) 14 (0) 'Review of Our Policy in the Mediterranean' 18 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.

85. Keyes to Churchill 21 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.



Sardinia, and thought the main difficulty was in the two C-in-Cs' limited concent of small raids. As far as he was concerned, the forces currently in the Middle East should be sufficient for MANDIBLES. The growing threat to the Balkans might involve Turkey, and if she was attacked the Dodecanese would have to be cantured quickly, with whatever forces were available.<sup>86</sup>

Churchill took some time to consider the recommendations made at this meeting, as he was still reluctant to release the Commandos and the Glen ships. The claim had been made that MANDIBLES could be conducted sooner if the assault shipping were used, and it was Churchill's impatience for some offensive stroke which prompted his release of some of the elements of the striking force. An associated question was how the force would get to the Middle East. It could either go around the Cape, or through the Mediterranean when naval cover was available. In both cases, it would arrive about the same time, the end of February. Churchill's reservations about having the force out of action for an extended period on the safer route, via the Cane, were allayed by the JPS assurance that there would still be sufficient landing craft available for operations from the United Kingdom. Keyes was later to discount this, noting that the JPS had overlooked the fact that there would be no assault shipping to carry them.

Churchill gave his decision on 21 January 1941. He would authorise the sailing of the three Glen ships, with their full complements of landing craft and Commandos (less one Commando which would be replaced by local ones formed in the Middle East) around the Cape at

87

the earliest opportunity. This decision was not taken lightly, since it was made, as the War Office later stated, 'at the cost of 88 paralysing for some months operations in the Western Mediterranean. The Royal Scotsman and the Karanja, with a sufficient number of commandos for small operations, were to remain in the United Kingdom. Churchill directed that the commando force in the United Kingdom was to be immediately reconstituted to the full strength of 5,000 fully equipped personnel, and would continue its training. 'If this is not done we shall have lost an essential weapon of offence needed to man and use the new landing craft which are coming out steadily now from the builders. It will be necessary for the DCO to remain at home to reorganise and rebuild this force'.

Keyes did not passively accept the decision to abandon WORKSHOP. He wrote to Churchill on 22 January 1941 urging its execution, and it was not until Churchill finally consented to see him, on 27 January 1941, that Keyes gave up his last hope of salvaging WORKSHOP. The debate was conducted with considerable bitterness, and would contribute to the second attempt at reorganising the combined operations 89 system.

Another argument broke out over the breaking up of Force 103, an action which Keyes strongly opposed. As has been noted, he had come to regard it as an integral whole, an independent striking force useful for any combined operation. When he learned of the decision to send the three Glens around the Cape he immediately asked for an interview with Churchill, as his instructions opened up 'a question of policy on

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87. COS(41) 15 (0) 'Note by Secretary' 21 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.

88. WO to C-in-C Middle East 1 Feb 41, PREM 3/124/2.

89. Keyes to Churchill 28 Jan 41. DEFE 2/698.



which I am better qualified to advise you than anyone else'. This interview was refused.<sup>90</sup> Keyes then approached the COS, requesting that a larger number of Special Service troops be sent. He argued that the plan to send half of Nos. 2, 3, and 4 Special Service Battalions, i.e. three Commandos, would result in the morale of those left behind becoming even worse, and there would probably be a large number of requests for transfers back to parent units. The re-forming of the battalions from the infantry training centres would mean that it would be about four months before the Special Service units would become fully operational again. There was also the problem of finding sufficient officers of the right type. Haydon had felt that 'the Mediterranean should be our happy hunting ground', and urged the despatch of at least the three Special Service battalions in the Glens as integral units.<sup>91</sup> The COS, however, rejected Keyes' proposals, on the grounds that Churchill's instructions were 'perfectly implicit on this point'.<sup>92</sup>

Keyes then tried Churchill again, writing to him on 22 January 1941 that, 'without realising it', Churchill was breaking up 'the splendid little amphibious force which I have organised, trained, and inspired'. He remonstrated that the first flight lift capability of the vessels remaining in the United Kingdom would be less than 1,000 men. Contrary to the Admiralty view, he thought the assault shipping remaining in the United Kingdom was the governing factor, rather than the number of landing craft. He again stressed the effect the action would have on the remaining commandos, and pressed

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90. Keyes to Churchill 21 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

91. Haydon to Keyes 22 Jan 41, K 13/5.

92. Ismay to Churchill 21 Jan 41, Annex to COS(41) 17 (0) 'Mediterranean Policy' 22 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.

93

for the passage of the entire force through the Mediterranean.

Churchill replied that the decision had been made, and Keyes and his commandos would 'have to obey orders like other people and that is all there is to be said about it'.<sup>94</sup> Churchill finally saw Keyes on 27 January 1941. Keyes accepted the decision, although he hoped that a proposed plan for the capture of Sardinia, termed YORKER, might result in the cancellation of the Glens sailing on their 'wild goose chase'. Keyes tried once more, writing to Churchill on 28 January 1941. He explained that the decision to split up the striking force had been based on the 'false premise' that the United Kingdom would retain a sufficient amphibious capability. He made the valid point that the sailing of the Glens would only result in two forces 'each too weak to take a decisive part in any operation east or west of Malta'. He felt that the Naval Staff recognised this but, having frustrated WORKSHOP, they 'were delighted to send the Glens abroad so that the execution of any action for which they might be held responsible would be impossible'.<sup>95</sup>

There was nothing Keyes could do to change the course of events, and the Glens sailed on 31 January 1941. Even the manner of their sailing, however, added to Keyes' frustration. On 17 January 1941 the Admiralty had signalled the Glen ships that all communications in connection with personnel, material, and movements should be routed directly to the authorities concerned, and not through the DCO.<sup>96</sup>

Keyes was outraged that he was to receive no further infor-

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93. Keyes to Churchill 22 Jan 41, PREM 3/507.

94. Churchill to Keyes 24 Jan 41, K 140/3/1.

95. Keyes to Churchill 28 Jan 41, DEFE 2/698.

96. Admiralty to Glengyle, Glenroy, and Glenearn 17 Jan 41, DEFE 2/698.



mation on their activities, particularly when he learned of the embarkation arrangements. 'The essence of successful amphibious warfare lies in training the soldiers and sailors of each unit to work together', he once noted. He had assumed that the only logical arrangement was to embark a Commando on each of the ships with which they had been working, so that in the course of the voyage they could become true amphibious units and would be ready for service immediately upon their arrival in the Mediterranean. 'It did not occur to me for one moment that any other course could have been contemplated'. Keyes now learned, too late, that No. 11 Commando had been split in half and loaded on both the Glengyle and Glenroy, separated from the crew of the Glenearn with whom they were to work. To make matters worse, because of the overcrowding on the Glengyle and Glenroy, 18 commando officers were separated from their units and embarked in the Glenearn, which was carrying miscellaneous replacements. Keyes therefore suggested that the Glens should put in at Capetown to have the accommodation altered. Churchill, who hoped that MANDIBLES could be executed immediately upon the arrival of the ships in the Middle East, agreed and asked<sup>97</sup> the COS for a report on it.

The COS replied that the DCO's staff had been consulted at every stage of the embarkation, and had been in agreement with all the arrangements. They maintained that 'it is not practicable to stow ships tactically for a combined operation unless the detailed<sup>98</sup> plan is known'. As the MANDIBLES plan was still in preparation

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97. Churchill to Ismay 12 Feb 41, PREM 3/124/2.

98. Ismay to Churchill 14 Feb 41, PREM 3/124/2.

it had not been possible to load the ships tactically, and the DCO's staff had not suggested that this be done. The haste to despatch the ships had also caused loading problems, and unless the MANDIBLES plan could be flown to Capetown in time to meet the convoy, nothing useful could be achieved there. The COS maintained that MANDIBLES could be carried out 'more satisfactorily and at an earlier date' if all the final preparations were made at Alexandria. Churchill agreed to this on 15 February 1941.<sup>99</sup> This dispute is a rather strange one, and the details of the arrangements for embarkation are obscure. It is rather unlikely that Keyes would have complained if all the assertions of the COS were correct; if they were, it would indicate a serious breakdown of communications in Keyes' small headquarters. It is therefore probable that the truth lies somewhere in between the two positions. The movement of the ships prior to sailing was not controlled by the COHQ, and, as only two Glens were sent to Lamlash for the embarkation of the commandos, it appears that the Special Service Brigade made the best of what it was given. Certainly the COS' contention that the ships could only be tactically loaded if the detailed plans were known would have been opposed by Keyes, who on at least one prior occasion had been prepared to carry out an operation on a 'standard' loading.

The three Glens and Nos. 7, 8, and 11 Commandos, termed 'Lay-force' after their commander, Brigadier R. Laycock, passed from the operational control of the DCO on their departure. Their employment in the Mediterranean demonstrated the accuracy of Keyes' predictions about mismanagement and improper tasking. Under the pressure of

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99. Churchill's notation on Ismay to Churchill 14 Feb 41, PREM 3/124/2.



events this was perhaps inevitable, but Keyes' claim that a major part of his highly trained force was being thrown away for no worthwhile purpose was well founded. The outcome of the actions of 'Layforce' in the Mediterranean was to be a source of recrimination later, and would further add to the feud between the DCO and the COS.<sup>100</sup>

On 27 January 1941 Wavell informed London that, while both C-in-Cs considered MANDIBLES of the 'utmost and urgent importance', the operation, which would involve the whole of the newly-forming 6th Division, would not be possible until the beginning of April.<sup>101</sup> Cunningham at the time also lacked a flag officer to act as SNO Landings, and on 31 January 1941 requested that one be sent out from the United Kingdom, adding, in reference to Keyes, that he hoped 'there will be no suggestion of any very senior admiral being sent'.<sup>102</sup> Pound showed this to Churchill, so that he would be aware of Cunningham's feelings, whereupon Churchill drafted a critical reply to Cunningham. Pound intercepted this, and managed to dissuade Churchill from sending a message on the condition that Pound would convey the substance of Churchill's rebuke.<sup>103</sup>

Pound sided with Cunningham, informing him on 8 February 1941 that it had been 'a hard fight to get rid of' WORKSHOP. 'As you can imagine R.K. is a perfect nuisance and is at daggers drawn with everyone', in particular with Pound himself. Noting that he had shown

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100. For details of Layforce's actions see St. George Saunders, pp. 58-76; Buckley, pp. 176-181; and Fergusson, pp. 94-105.

101. C-in-C Middle East to War Office 27 Jan 41, PREM 3/309/1.

102. C-in-C Mediterranean to CNS 1301/31 Jan 41, PREM 3/124/2.

103. Pound to Churchill 3 Feb 41 and Churchill to Pound 4 Feb 41, PREM 3/124/2.

Churchill Cunningham's message in order to support his own opposition to Keyes' going to the Mediterranean, Pound described how Churchill had 'gone off the deep end over it', 'I cannot understand why he allows himself to be burdened with R.K, as he must realise how absolutely futile the latter is except as regards creating trouble',  
<sup>104</sup>  
 he concluded. This minor skirmish well reflects the antipathy between the CNS and the DCO, which to one degree or another affected every decision regarding combined operations during Keyes' tenure.

MANDIBLES then became intertwined with LUSTRE, the shipping of British troops to Greece. By the beginning of April 1941, when the British were capable of mounting MANDIBLES, the situation in the Western Desert was such that the forces earmarked for it were used  
<sup>105</sup>  
 in the desert war. MANDIBLES, another operation on which much time and effort had been spent, and for which a large part of the amphibious resources available had been diverted, had, through delay, been overtaken by German initiatives.

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104. Pound to Cunningham 8 Feb 41, Cunningham papers Add. 52561.

105. COS(41) 122 Mtg 4 Apr 41, CAB 79/10.



## CHAPTER XV

### CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC (3)

#### THE CANARIES

Operations in the Atlantic remained a low priority during the early part of 1941. The JISC, at the beginning of March, thought that the next German move would take place in the eastern, rather than the western, Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> Even as forces for BRISK and SHRAPNEL were being dismantled, however, the EPS were reconsidering the situation if the Germans did in fact enter Spain. The only effective riposte still would be the seizure of the Atlantic islands. In looking for alternative operations, the EPS had, on 8 March 1941, reviewed the possibility of seizing the Canaries. They considered that, since this project had been last examined, in mid-1940, there had been a 'complete change' in the governing factors that had then rendered it impracticable. This was a rather sweeping statement. Although the project must have seemed attractive when the forces required for it were compared to those needed for the other alternatives - expeditions on the Spanish mainland or in North Africa, the forces then available to the British do not seem markedly greater than in 1940. Nevertheless, the EPS and the DCO's staff now decided that the capture of the Canaries was a feasible operation. According to the EPS it had a good chance of success', and was 'in accordance with our fundamental strategy of defending our sea communications<sup>2</sup> rather than in starting land warfare on the Continent'. At this time the project was viewed as an isolated action, no effort being

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1. COS(41) 90 Mtg 8 Mar 41, CAB 79/9.

2. JP(41) 212(E) 'Capture of the Canary Islands' 12 Mar 41, WO 106/2953.

made to evaluate it in relation to the operations against the Azores or Cape Verdes. Low key studies on the Canaries continued throughout March 1941.

The scare of 22 March 1941 about German U-boats refuelling in the Azores caused the COS to check the status of the contingency plans for this area. Assuming that a British occupation of the Portuguese Atlantic islands would lead both to a German occupation of Portugal and to an ultimatum to Spain to use the bases in the Canaries, the JPS were instructed to review the strategic value of the Canaries to the enemy.<sup>3</sup> It was at this time that the JPS reversed practically all of the assumptions upon which the operations against the Portuguese Atlantic islands had been founded.

The JPS declared on 23 March 1941 that the Canaries would offer the Germans excellent facilities as a base for surface raiders, submarines, and long range aircraft. The scale of attack on the Sierra Leone convoys would then be similar to that encountered in the North West Approaches, and this could be countered only by weakening the escort forces nearer home to a dangerous degree. In this respect, the JPS thought 'the possession by us of the Azores and the Cape Verdes would do little to mitigate this danger, and we should probably have to abandon these convoys and route all traffic via the western Atlantic'. They therefore recommended against the premature seizure of the Azores and Cape Verdes, if this would result in the Germans gaining use of the Canaries. If it were clear that the Germans were about to occupy the Azores and Cape Verdes themselves, however,

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3. COS(41) 6 Mtg (0) 22 Mar 41, CAB 79/55.



then the British should act, lest they should lose all three groups of islands. These views were accepted by the COS and embodied in a<sup>4</sup> minute to Churchill.

The change in position is rather startling. While the appreciation of the possible German threat in the area was relatively constant since the summer of 1940, the Canaries had earlier been discarded as an impracticable operation and ALLOY and SHRAPNEL seen as an acceptable substitute. Now that the JPS considered the resources available sufficient for an attack upon the Canaries, increasing weight was placed upon their importance. This may indeed have been correct, but the positions were contradictory. If the Portuguese islands were suitable enough to keep operations against them mounted for almost eight months, they should still have sufficed. If they did not suffice now, it is difficult to see why they were considered suitable before. During this period, the main considerations were the British need of an alternative to Gibraltar, and the threat posed by German use of the Atlantic islands. It was not until later that the Portuguese islands became important for the Allies as anti-submarine bases.

Churchill was not content with the COS recommendations. TRUCK and BASEBALL, then in readiness, had been designed to seize the Azores and Cape Verdes against Portuguese resistance. 'Surely if the Germans take over any one of these islands', Churchill noted on 24 March 1941, 'we shall have to try and beat them out. It is curious that no attempt should be made to deal with this proposition'. He was also extremely concerned about the suggestion of re-routing the Sierra Leone convoys

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4. COS(41) 7 Mtg (0) 23 Mar 41, CAB 79/55.

to the west. 'This would be a supreme admission of failure and defeat at sea. The Admiralty must not suppose that such a policy would be accepted by Cabinet or Parliament'.<sup>5</sup> This prompted another review of the plans, to see what could be done if the Germans occupied the Portuguese Atlantic islands first - a very likely proposition if they contemplated a move into the Iberian Peninsula.

On 25 March 1941 the COS consequently invited the DCO, in consultation with the JPS, to prepare a plan for the capture of the Azores and Cape Verdes in the face of German opposition. At the same time the JPS, in consultation with the DCO, was to prepare a plan for the capture of the Canaries, on the assumption that the Spanish, assisted by a few Germans, resisted.<sup>6</sup> These arrangements were almost immediately superseded by the directions for the organisation of the striking force, and the arrangements for planning its operations. Priority was still given, however, to the Portuguese Atlantic islands.

The JPS report on a number of plans for the capture of the Azores against German opposition was ready by 9 April 1941. Providing that the landings were undertaken shortly after the German occupation, they were feasible with only a small addition to the forces previously earmarked for TRUCK and SHRAPNEL. The governing factor determining the choice of plan would be the amount of naval support available.<sup>7</sup> By this time, however, the situation seemed less threatening. The JISC reported that no German move into Spain was likely

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5. COS(41) 67 (0) 'Operations TRUCK and BASEBALL' 24 Mar 41, CAB 80/56.

6. COS(41) 108 Mtg 25 Mar 41, CAB 79/10.

7. JP(41) 281 (E) 'Capture of Azores against German Opposition' 9 Apr 41, DEFE 2/613.



until after the situation in southeast Europe was clarified, and the COS therefore made no explicit decisions on the mounting of operations in the Atlantic.<sup>8</sup> Work on the plans continued concurrently with the assembly of the striking force.

Towards the end of April 1941 the see-saw tipped again. The JISC reported on 22 April 1941 that German pressure on Spain was increasing, and it thought a German move to the south-west almost a certainty. Although there were no concrete indications of troop movements toward the Spanish frontier, and no indications at all of any German moves against the Atlantic islands, the JISC nevertheless felt that a German move towards Gibraltar might well take place within a month or so. Unlike the Foreign Office, the JISC thought that there was no immediate danger of a German attack on the Soviet Union after the campaign in Greece.<sup>9</sup> TRUCK was therefore again placed on 48 hours notice, and the COS questioned the readiness of the striking force. As has been noted, although the plans for an assault against German opposition were ready, little had actually been done to assemble the force.

Whereas the JPS had advised caution a month earlier, recommending that no action be taken until it appeared certain that Spain would enter the war on the Axis side, they declared on 23 April 1941 that, with the strengthening of the German position in the Balkans and in Cyrenaica, and the increasing pressure upon Spain, diplomacy alone was insufficient to keep the Germans out of Spain. They there-

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8. JIC(41) 144 'German Strategy in 1941' 10 Apr 41, CAB 79/10.

9. COS(41) 143 Mtg 22 Apr 41, CAB 79/11. For the intelligence background to these operations, see F.H. Hinsley, British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol 1 (London 1979) pp. 249-259. Even with this, the intelligence situation in the summer of 1941 remains unclear.

fore thought 'the time to act has now come'. As soon as the position in the Balkans was cleared up, Germany would turn to Spain, so that within a short time Gibraltar would cease to be of use to the British and the Germans would be in the Canaries. To offset this disadvantageous strategic position, the JPS thought that action must be taken to secure bases in the Atlantic islands. The courses open seemed to be either to seize the Azores or Cape Verdes immediately, or to seize the Canaries as soon as forces could be prepared. The former seemed to seriously prejudice the chances of the latter, and the JPS declared that 'it was always recognised that the Canaries offered the only substitute for Gibraltar as a base for big ships'. They explained that the former plans had not included the Canaries, because, ostensibly, the British had lacked the necessary fighter defences and assault shipping. The JPS considered that these constraints no longer applied, and they therefore recommended that the Canaries should have first priority. An outline plan, termed CHUTNEY, had already been prepared, which called for all the forces earmarked for the striking force plus an infantry brigade group and other supporting arms. The provision of these forces, and the shipping required, did not seem an 'insurmountable' problem, and the JPS recommended that the expedition be mounted. Although the TRUCK force would gradually be absorbed into the CHUTNEY force, BASEBALL would be kept mounted, and would take place simultaneously with CHUTNEY. It was considered possible that the Azores and Madeira could then be peacefully occupied by small forces carried in warships. All of these operations could be mounted in as short a time as three weeks if the go ahead was given.



This recommendation was in line with the earlier JPS report of March 1941 on the strategic advantage of the Canaries to the Germans, but it still does not adequately explain their reversal on the issue of the Canaries. The glib phrase that it was always assumed that the Canaries were more important than the Azores and Cape Verdes as a naval base does not stand up under examination. The recommendation to take action as soon as possible, which would almost certainly have brought Spain into the war and caused the loss of Gibraltar, the very things that the operation was designed to counter, is astonishing, given the actual German intentions, and represents an intelligence misappreciation of the first order.

The JPS recommendation was considered by the COS on 24 April 1941 in two meetings, the second with Churchill in the chair. The COS, considering the recent developments in Spain, supported CHUTNEY, and Churchill was 'wholeheartedly' in favour of all the necessary preparations being made 'forthwith'. The final decision to launch the expedition would be taken nearer the time when it was ready. It was at this time that Churchill changed the name to PUMA, as one<sup>11</sup> 'wanted the biggest possible cat to catch a canary'.

It was immediately apparent that, in addition to the shipping of the striking force, another four or five ships capable of carrying about 8,000 men would be required for the PUMA force. The only way of obtaining the extra shipping quickly was by reducing the capacity of the next convoy to the Middle East; all the other operations would delay PUMA until the end of May or June. It is a measure of the urgency of PUMA that planning proceeded on the assumption this would be done, even before Churchill approved it on 26 April 1941,

11. COS(41)146 and 147 Mtg 24 Apr 41, CAB 79/11 and Fergusson, pp.78-79.

and that, in doing so, he agreed, without further comment, to delay<sup>12</sup> the movement of part of 50th Division to the Middle East.

The outline plans prepared by the JPS and the directives for the military and naval commanders were approved at the COS meeting of 26 April 1941, with Keyes and the commanders present. Pound did not think that the commanders should be bound by the JPS plan, and they were consequently instructed to report in a few days as to whether they were satisfied with the forces allocated to them. Sturges had had a short period to study the plans, and was generally satisfied that they gave a 'reasonable prospect of success', although he thought another two Belgian LSI(S) and a Commando might be added for a diversion. Hamilton had not yet seen the plans and so had no comments. It was agreed that the expedition should be ready to sail<sup>13</sup> by 17 May 1941.

Keyes queried Ismay about the command of the expedition, but this was not passed on to Churchill. Ismay told Keyes on 27 April 1941 that Churchill had been too busy to consider it, and suggested that, as the meeting with the COS on 26 April had been 'most satisfactory', and that, as everything was apparently proceeding on the lines Keyes wished, 'it would be better to leave well alone, and not bring the Prime Minister into the matter at this stage'. He noted that every-<sup>14</sup>thing seemed to be going forward 'serenely'. Keyes thanked Ismay<sup>15</sup> for his efforts, and appeared to be satisfied. By 30 April 1941, however, he was writing to Churchill directly, intimating that the

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12. Ismay to Churchill 25 Apr 41, PREM 3/361/1.

13. COS(41) 12 Mtg (0) 26 Apr 41, CAB 79/55.

14. Ismay to Keyes 27 Apr 41, K 140/3/2.

15. Keyes to Ismay 28 Apr 41, K 140/3/2.



joint commanders could not acquire the experience needed for such a complex operation in the time available. 'Surely the time has come to make full use of such qualities as I possess and my experience. I will not fail you.' He enclosed the papers he had previously sent Ismay, with a new covering note, quoting Ismay's assurance that everything was going forward 'serenely'. '"Serenely" aptly describes the tempo of the war as conducted by inter-service committees, with the result that we have been forestalled by the Germans time after time. But the time has now arrived for dynamic action.' Although he thought that the two commanders were competent officers, he felt that the complexity and importance of PUMA required not the joint command proposed, but the system, provided for in the Manual of Combined Operations, for 'unified command', both in the preparation and in the execution. 'This last month's delay and the speed with which the enemy have delivered their successive strokes have left us no time to spare, and a supreme commander with experience of combined operations should be appointed without delay and given full responsibility and a free hand', he told Churchill, with little doubt as to who this commander should be.<sup>16</sup> He evidently received no reply to this.

Keyes and the commanders met the COS again on 3 May 1941, at which time the commanders presented their appreciation of PUMA. Additional naval forces, including a battleship, were requested, as well as additional air cover. The VCNS promised that the Navy would try to find the ships, but noted that, as all the available aircraft carriers were involved in operation JAGUAR, the air reinforcement of Malta, PUMA might have to be postponed. The commanders expressed

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16. Keyes to Churchill 30 Apr 41, PREM 3/361/1.

their concern that this could result in PUMA being carried out in an unfavourable moon period. They pointed out that this might require a change in the plan; at best the chances of success would be reduced. The committee accepted this drawback, however, if the air support question could not be resolved. The assembly and training of the force was now progressing satisfactorily, and one fairly comprehensive rehearsal was scheduled. TRUCK would have to be dismounted from 17 6 May 1941 to integrate the forces, and this too was accepted.

Keyes was still involved in the planning process, and he met the commanders and the JPS on 8 May 1941 for a review. The joint commanders again stressed that a moonless night was essential. The force would now be ready to sail by 22 May 1941, for an operation about 18 or 2 June. Keyes and the commanders presented the plan to the Defence Committee (Operations) the next day. There was no problem with the military preparations, but as the situation in Spain had apparently eased, Churchill reminded the committee that it would be necessary to consider the political aspects of launching PUMA. There had been no adverse developments in Spain, and he thought that launching the expedition in advance of such incidents would be undesirable, and would have an unfortunate political effect. He therefore asked the commanders if PUMA could be kept in readiness for an indefinite period, and what the effects of this would be. Sturges and Hamilton explained that in this case the force would continue training for PUMA, but would have to be at 7 days notice. The committee eventually authorised the commanders to proceed with the preparations for PUMA, with the proviso that the final decision to launch the operation

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17. COS(41) 13 Mtg (0) 3 May 41, CAB 79/55.

18. COS(41) 169 Mtg, Secretary's Standard File 8 May 41, CAB 79/86.



would have to be made by the government in the light of the circum-  
<sup>19</sup>stances at the time. In the meanwhile small forces were also being  
<sup>20</sup>prepared to occupy the Azores and Madeira by 'fair dealing'.

Keyes was not pleased with the possibility of postponement, and wrote personally to Churchill urging action. Since he thought that the matter of the assault lay within his directorate, he ventured to make some suggestions on the general implications of a delay. If PUMA was postponed, he thought that surprise would be lost, and the hazards of the assault greatly increased. He also pointed out that if the expedition was held indefinitely, the assault could not be delivered in less than 17 days from the time of the decision. If the initiative were left in German hands the British might be forestalled again; and if the Germans had the time to organise the defences PUMA would be a very formidable operation requiring far larger forces than at present allocated. As it was, all the assault shipping available was insufficient to carry the present force. He also wrote to Eden asking him to use his influence on Churchill to have PUMA executed. Keyes told Eden that he had placed all his resources at the disposal of the commanders and, except in an advisory capacity, was no longer in the picture, but that the short time to prepare the force had already revealed the inexperience of the commanders in combined operations. He pressed again the constant themes of action - 'procrastination is the thief of time - time is half a victory which, being lost, is irrevocable' - and of his desire  
<sup>21</sup>for command. Eden assured Keyes on 15 May 1941 that the Defence

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19. DO(41) 27 Mtg (0) 9 May 41, CAB 69/2.

20. COS(41) 173 Mtg 12 May 41, CAB 79/11.

21. Keyes to Eden 12 May 41, K 13/15.

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Committee would give his views the most careful consideration.

Annotating some of his earlier papers at this time, Keyes noted that 12 days had passed since his letter to Churchill urging the appointment of a supreme commander, and he considered it 'unquestionable that the lack of such a commander has resulted in considerable delay'.<sup>23</sup>

The Defence Committee (Operations) met on 14 May 1941 to decide whether PUMA should in fact sail on 23 May 1941. Eden believed that the situation in Spain was 'a little easier', and Churchill decided that in view of the situation he could not launch the operation. The possibility of German forestallment would have to be accepted.<sup>24</sup> PUMA force was consequently ordered to be kept at 7 days notice. Keyes at this time was in Scotland, watching the training of the force. He was quite satisfied with the progress being made, and thought that the force could be maintained at peak efficiency for a fortnight. When informed of the postponement he wrote to Churchill telling him that he fully realised that no other course of action had been possible. Keyes was thinking in terms of only a short delay, and promised to make further proposals for the force before the fortnight was up.<sup>25</sup>

The Majority of PUMA force conducted a rehearsal the night of 15 May 1941. The results were considered satisfactory, although the Royal Marines needed further training with the supporting arms, and the tempo of the exercise was rather slow. This rehearsal was con-

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22. Eden to Keyes 15 May 41, K 13/15.

23. Keyes to Churchill 30 Apr 41, PREM 3/361/1.

24. DO(41) 29 Mtg 14 May 41, CAB 69/2.

25. Keyes to Churchill 16 May 41, PREM 3/330/7.



ducted by moonlight, and after seeing it both commanders decided that the landing plan for PUMA was definitely not feasible unless<sup>26</sup> carried out either in darkness or with the moon in the first quarter.

While this was taking place the directives were prepared for the commanders of the small expeditions to the Azores and Madeira. As there had lately been some reports on the strengthening of the defences in the Canaries, these operations began to take on a greater importance. If PUMA failed the British should at least be certain of the Azores and the Cape Verdes. As the contemplated operation against the Azores had really been in the nature of a 'bluff', it was now not considered adequate. The JPS were thus instructed to come up with proposals for capturing the Azores against opposition, without interfering with the PUMA force. The possibility of inducing the United States to take action in the Azores, leaving the British to cover only the Canaries, was even considered, and the Foreign Office was asked to study an approach to the United States on these<sup>27</sup> lines.

Keyes met the COS on 21 May 1941 to discuss the implications of holding PUMA force on 7 days notice. The force was to be disembarked so as to continue its training, and the possibility of leave was raised. Keyes favoured this, pointing out that under the present plan there were 12 days each month favourable to the operation, and 6 days on which it would be impracticable. As the latter moon phase had just started the expedition would be unlikely to sail before 13 June 1941. Although it meant that the whole force could not be kept

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26. GS(P) to DMO&P 18 May 41, WO 106/2953.

27. COS(41) 182 Mtg 20 May 41, CAB 79/11.

at 7 days notice, the COS consequently approved the leave,

Following this, Keyes explained to the COS that, owing to the urgency of PUMA, the shipping had been loaded primarily for that operation. As there was now some time, he would prefer to reload them so that as far as possible each ship would have a standard load, thus enabling the force to be ready at the shortest possible notice for other operations. Keyes had plainly decided that PUMA, as all the Atlantic operations before, might be held over indefinitely, and he therefore sought to regain full control of the striking force.

It is considered desirable that the troops and vessels should now be placed under the DCO operationally as far as their movements are concerned - consulting EPS as necessary - for training. Generally, the Directorate of Combined Operations and the CTC are better equipped to carry out training than newly selected commanders and their staffs, who cannot have had the benefit of the same recent and intensive study of combined operations.

On a decision being reached to carry out an operation, the appointment of commanders would again be considered.<sup>29</sup>

This question of control is finely balanced, and well illustrates the organisational weakness in the system for combined operations. On the one hand it would be unrealistic to separate the commanders and their staffs from the formations they would lead during the operation, giving the formations to an outside agency for training and then reuniting them just prior to the operation. On the other hand the indefinite retention of all the amphibious troops for the operation, in an organisation separate from the Directorate of Combined Operations, which after all, was responsible for training,

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28. COS(41) 183 Mtg 21 May 41, CAB 79/11.

29. Keyes to COS 21 May 41, K 13/8.



doctrine, and research and development, was wasteful of resources, and bound to lead to endless bickering. Perhaps the only way to resolve the problem would have been to place the commanders, staffs, and troops under the DCO, as a general-purpose striking force. This was in effect the position which Keyes had demanded for so long, and which, for both good and bad reasons, had been so strenuously resisted by the service departments. This was indeed the crux of the problem, but it was again bypassed, and things were left to drift with the customary vague assurances.

Sturges and Hamilton had meanwhile been working on an alternate plan to enable PUMA to be carried out in moonlight. On their return from the rehearsals in Scotland they presented this to the COS, with Keyes once again present. This alternative plan entailed changing some of the objectives, and involved the use of far larger forces, particularly naval, and more shipping. The COS did not think that these could be made available, and the alternative plan was discarded. Pound felt that, as PUMA was a difficult operation, it should take place under the best circumstances. Keyes agreed in principle, but thought that PUMA could be carried out in less favourable moon conditions. The COS agreed with Pound, and accepted the fact that PUMA should only be launched during the 10 days of the dark moon period each month. This was recommended to Churchill, who agreed, and this meant that for the next few months the sailing dates would be 12-21 June, 12-21 July, and 10-19 August, for an assault on 21-30 June, 21-30 July, and 19-23 August respectively.

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30. COS(41) 186 Mtg 23 May 41 and COS(41) 190 Mtg 26 May 41, CAB 79/11; Hollis to Churchill 26 May 41, PREM 3/361/1.

On 10 June 1941 Keyes met the COS to consider whether PUMA should be mounted in the June moon period. While the COS, on purely military grounds, thought that it was desirable to carry out the operation, the political objections seemed to be still as strong as they had been a month prior. Pound finally agreed that if the Defence Committee (Operations) stood PUMA down again, it would remain at 7 days notice and would, as Keyes had suggested, come under the DCO for training. Keyes stated that he thought this would be a more satisfactory arrangement than before, since, although he had been able to assist in the training of PUMA force, he had found it necessary to refer a number of minor matters of detail to the COS for decision. Given the necessary authority, he could easily settle such things himself. <sup>31</sup>

The question of launching PUMA was brought up in the Defence Committee (Operations) meeting later that day, and the decision to stand PUMA down until July, along with Keyes' responsibility for training, was confirmed. <sup>32</sup> A message was then sent to the joint commanders and the VACTC, which directed that all matters of policy in training, any operational or administrative matters in regard to the force's operational role, and any proposed movement of ships, should be referred to the DCO. Detailed matters of training would <sup>33</sup> be handled by the local authorities. Keyes now seemed to have all the authority he had requested, but it remained to see how the arrangements would work in practice.

On 23 June 1941 the CIGS suggested that, owing to the importance

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31. COS(41) 207 Mtg 10 Jun 41, CAB 79/12.

32. DO(41) 40 Mtg 10 Jun 41, CAB 69/2.

33. Keyes to Joint Commanders, VACTC, and FOIC Greenock 12 Jun 41, K 13/9.



attached to PUMA, Keyes should review the plan and the forces allocated for it in the light of the continued strengthening of the defences by the Spanish, and of the need to do everything possible to

34

ensure a success. Keyes saw the COS on this on 24 June 1941. He doubted whether, under the new circumstances, the force was sufficient for the task, particularly as the plan was to a great extent dependent upon surprise. A far stronger naval force would be necessary if success was to be assured. The COS then asked Keyes, on the assumption that whatever forces were necessary would be made available, to discuss with the joint commanders the requirement for additional

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forces.

The commanders consulted with the EPS, and on 30 June 1941 submitted their appreciation. They pointed out a number of weaknesses in the existing plan, including the shortage of air support and the lack of numbers in the landing force. They therefore recommended the addition of a four-battalion infantry brigade, with supporting arms, totalling 5,500 all ranks, with 370 tanks, guns, and vehicles. In order to carry these, another 4 transports and 2 MT ships would be needed, and a further 2 'Maracaibos' and 2 MLC carriers would be necessary to expedite the landing. The naval forces would have to be increased by an 8" cruiser, an aircraft carrier, and several smaller ships, and approximately 3 more fighter and bomber squadrons would be needed. Even with these reinforcements, the joint commanders thought that they could only guarantee the seizure of the naval base at La Luz and the airfield at Gando, both on the Gran Canary, and that it might not be possible to seize the remaining islands in

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34. COS(41) 221 Mtg 23 Jun 41, CAB 79/12.

35. COS(41) 222 Mtg 24 Jun 41, CAB 79/12.

the group.

Keyes and the joint commanders met the COS to examine this problem on 1 July 1941. After a lengthy discussion the COS agreed to provide the additional military forces. The extra assault shipping was just coming into service, and could be allocated to PUMA. They took note of the other forces required. In some respects this was not a major diversion of military forces, for the great majority of the reinforcements would in any case have been included in a follow-up convoy scheduled to sail as soon as PUMA had taken place. 36th Infantry Brigade was therefore added to the original PUMA force of 101st and 102nd Royal Marine Brigades, the Special Service Brigade, and 29th Infantry Brigade. As far as the shipping was concerned, the Ministry of War Transport was struggling to find ships for all the demands that were being placed upon it, and was not at all inclined to lock up valuable shipping indefinitely. It therefore argued that the majority of the additional transport could be taken up when the operation was nearer execution. In the interim the Karanja and Hydra could be recommissioned as Royal Navy infantry assault ships. As soon as this was done an exercise combining all the forces involved

37

could be held at Scapa Flow.

The increase in the size of PUMA force was to lead to other problems. On 5 July the CIGS raised the issue of the military command. As the forces involved had been considerably increased since the inception of the operation, the present headquarters was now inadequate. It would be necessary to either add a new headquarters or to increase

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36. COS(41) 121 (0) 'Operation PUMA' 30 Jun 41, CAB 80/58.

37. COS(41) 18 Mtg (0) 1 Jul 41, CAB 79/55.



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Sturges' staff, in particular his signals organisation. Keyes, Bourne (back as AGRM), and Sturges discussed this with the COS the following day. Two courses of action seemed feasible: to appoint a corps commander and nucleus staff to command the expedition, with Sturges commanding the assault force; or to appoint a senior and experienced army officer as Sturges' deputy. Keyes strongly favoured the latter. He thought that the addition of a corps staff was unnecessary, and the COS agreed that the addition of the staff might well result in a temporary upset of the teamwork of the force and the detailed planning of the operation, as well as producing an unfortunate psychological effect. Dill maintained that the right solution, in principle, was to appoint a corps commander, but he recognised the problems it might cause. The COS therefore agreed to have the War Office appoint an army officer as second in command to Sturges and to make arrangements, in consultation with the DCO,

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to augment the staff and signals. Dill was not satisfied, however, and raised the subject again on 9 July 1941. After the assault landing, PUMA entailed a considerable land operation, and Dill considered that the commander of the force should have experience in this type of warfare. He suggested, as this was a political appointment, that the matter should be placed before Churchill. Pound and Portal deferred to the military view, but felt that Churchill should also be advised

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of the disadvantages of such an appointment. A memorandum outlining both points of view was accordingly sent to Churchill, recommending that Lieutenant General H.B.D. Willcox be appointed the military commander. Churchill accepted the new arrangement on 11 July 1941,

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38. COS(41) 234 Mtg 5 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.

39. COS(41) 237 Mtg 8 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.

40. COS(41) 238 Mtg 9 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.

although by 18 July 1941 he had decided to appoint Lieutenant General<sup>41</sup> H.R.G. Alexander as the military commander. This was certainly not the only occasion where Keyes had reached an agreement with the COS at a meeting, only to have it reversed later when he was not present. Keyes and Sturges had worked well together; Keyes would not have the conflicts with Alexander that he was to have with Hamilton, but Alexander firmly supported the War Office position, and Keyes' influence was considerably diminished. A small example is seen by the fact that, whereas Sturges made use of the DCO's offices for planning, Alexander and Hamilton would work from the Admiralty.

The Ministry of War Transport was becoming increasingly concerned by the number of ships it was being asked to provide for indefinite periods for operations, which represented a substantial loss to the reinforcement and import programmes. Some of the ships<sup>42</sup> had already been lying idle for a year. A representative of the Ministry saw the COS on this on 16 July 1941, at the same time as the JPS were studying the additional shipping requirements for PUMA. At least three more MT ships were required for the full dress rehearsal. The next favourable period for sailing, due to the dates of the rehearsal, was 14-19 August, and in the course of the discussion it was pointed out that if PUMA was postponed again the whole operation might have to be reviewed in the light of the deteriorating weather conditions, the continual increasing of the strength of the garrison, the availability of naval forces, and even the possibility of a German invasion of the United Kingdom. Taking these factors, and the political situation, into account, it was agreed that the

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41. Hollis to Churchill 10 Jul 41, PREM 3/361/1.

42. COS(41) 432 'Merchant Shipping Held for Special Operations'  
15 Jul 41 CAB 80/29.



whole question of retaining valuable shipping should be reexamined<sup>43</sup> if PUMA was postponed after its next review on 6 August 1941. The COS had considered bringing the Glens back from the Middle East, and had inquired as to their availability. The C-in-C Middle East told them that only one was readily available, and on 17 July the COS decided to order the ship back to the United Kingdom. The move was halted by Churchill, however, who wanted the Glens used for combined<sup>44</sup> operations in the Middle East.

During July 1941 the situation in Spain seemed to worsen when Franco made a major speech which appeared to place him firmly in the Axis camp. The War Cabinet now thought that there was no question of his defending Spain against German subversion or attack. The decision would thus have to be made as to whether the British were ready to let matters develop until it suited Germany to bring Spain into the war, or whether they should themselves take the initiative. The economic and military policies in regard to Spain were therefore<sup>45</sup> reviewed on 21 July 1941. The Defence Committee (Operations) consequently took up the question of PUMA that same day. The opinion of the committee was that the Germans would enter Spain 'either when they had successfully dealt with Russia or if matters reached a deadlock on the Russian front', a view which certainly covered most of the possibilities. Echos of the earlier ALLOY and SHRAPNEL were heard when it was explained that if PUMA was not executed before October, the bad weather in the Atlantic might make it impracticable. The arguments for and against carrying out PUMA early on, at a time of British choosing, seemed to be fairly balanced. The majority, includ-

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43. COS(41) 247 Mtg 16 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.

44. Telegram WO to C-in-C ME 17 Jul 41, PREM 3/330/9.

45. WM(41) 72 Mtg 21 Jul 41, CAB 65/19.

ing Pound, favoured the execution of PUMA, and the committee therefore agreed in principle that the operation should be carried out 'at our own chosen time', and that preparations for sailing the expedition in August should proceed, despite all the disadvantages of alienating Spain and Portugal.<sup>46</sup>

Alexander, recently appointed, had been studying the PUMA plans, and met the COS on 22 July 1941. This was his first meeting with the COS, and it is interesting to note that Keyes was not present. In Alexander's opinion the plan still depended upon surprise for its success, and he was doubtful whether it could actually be achieved. He therefore considered that the size of his force should be increased sufficiently to ensure that it could force its way ashore if surprise failed. To do this he would need a third infantry brigade and the necessary landing craft, some more tanks, and an additional bomber squadron. The COS granted these increases on 22 July 1941 without any great discussion. The recommendation and decision has been made without reference to Keyes, and this marks the end of his influence on the plans and preparations for PUMA. After the decision, however, Keyes was called in for consultation, as the increase in the military forces was to come primarily from the units allocated to the operations against the Portuguese islands, now termed THRUSTER and SPRINGBOARD.<sup>47</sup> The COS also suggested that, as the Defence Committee (Operations) had approved PUMA in principle, further questions of detail could be decided with Churchill alone,<sup>48</sup> unless political considerations were paramount.

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46. DO(41) 52 Mtg, Confidential Annex 21 Jul 41, CAB 69/8.

47. COS(41) 20 Mtg (0) 22 Jul 41, CAB 79/55.

48. Hollis to Churchill 22 Jul 41, PREM 3/361/1.



Churchill saw the COS about PUMA the evening of 23 July 1941. The joint commanders were present; Keyes was not. Churchill thought that the political situation in Spain had worsened, and he was therefore in favour of carrying out PUMA at the earliest opportunity. If the situation altered 'radically' before the operation, the government would of course have to cancel it.

It was essential that PUMA be successful, since, if it was conducted, Gibraltar would be lost. Churchill therefore approved the recent additions to the PUMA force, and cancelled THRUSTER and SPRINGBOARD. He was also prepared to withhold any shipping necessary from trade. The rehearsal, termed LEAPFROG, was to start on 4 August 1941, after which the force would be ready to sail. The joint commanders then explained the details of their plan, and their belief that it held 'every reasonable chance of success'. The question of whether the operation should be conducted in August or September was then raised, by whom is not clear. This seems somewhat surprising, since the generally accepted view was that the operation should be conducted as early as possible. In any event, the commanders thought that August was preferable and Churchill agreed. The political situation was deemed to favour this month, and the chance of a German invasion of the United Kingdom then was small. If PUMA was successful, operations against the Portuguese islands could be carried out by elements of the PUMA force, and the plans were to be prepared with this in  
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mind.

All these decisions were explained to the War Cabinet by Churchill the following day, 24 July 1941. PUMA force would leave the

country about 10 August, and would be 9 or 10 days en route, so the operation could be called off at any time up to 10 August. This emphasis on the possibility of cancellation would seem to indicate something less than full backing for PUMA, even by Churchill, but the War Cabinet nevertheless took note of the decisions without<sup>50</sup> dissent.

On 28 July 1941, with the amalgamation of the PUMA, THRUSTER, and SPRINGBOARD forces, the code name was changed from PUMA to PILGRIM. Pound then brought up the results of a study of the prevailing weather conditions, which showed that the northeast trade winds made surf conditions in August particularly difficult. September would be a better month in this respect. Pound also felt that it would prove easier to find the necessary naval escorts in September, as well as providing time to study the results of LEAP-FROG. A more detailed study of the weather conditions was being<sup>51</sup> carried out in consultation with Hamilton. Considering the fact that operations against the Atlantic islands had, in one form or another, been mounted for a year, it is an indictment of slipshod staff work if the surf conditions had not been known beforehand. It is possible, of course, that Pound was looking for a convenient excuse to delay an operation with which he was not wholly in favour.

On 29 July 1941 the COS met with the joint commanders and the Directors of Intelligence. Once again it was clear that Pound was applying the brakes. Three main points were touched on in this

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50. WM(41) 74 Mtg 24 Jul 41, CAB 65/19. For details of Francos's speech see Hoare, pp. 112-114.

51. COS(41) 264 Mtg 28 Jul 41, CAB 79/13.



meeting, The first was Pound's statement that the need for destroyers for PILGRIM would deplete the British resources elsewhere to a great extent, and that the situation would be very much easier in September. The Directors of Intelligence then covered reports on the strengthening of the defences in the Canaries. Details were still lacking, and the British consuls there were to be instructed to report on the defences 'as a matter of urgency'. Alexander stated that the postponement of PILGRIM, from a military point of view, would not make much difference, as the overall defences could not be considerably strengthened in one month. Pound then brought up the point about the weather. Hamilton was not impressed by the argument on the surf conditions, and countered it with the assertion that the weather on the passage in September would probably be worse, with attendant fuelling problems. On balance, he did not see much difference between the two months from the point of view of the weather. Pound then produced other arguments favouring the postponement of PILGRIM. The British would retain the use of Gibraltar, with the ability to pass ships and aircraft into the Mediterranean, for a further month. Trade with the Iberian Peninsula could continue for another month. Finally the longer September nights would be an advantage to the assaulting force. The COS succumbed to Pound's arguments, and a memorandum was sent to Churchill recommending that PILGRIM be postponed until September. All the advantages listed above were enumerated, and a few more added. It was noted that if the decision to launch PILGRIM were taken in August, the operation would occur during the RIVIERA conference with Roosevelt. Alexander was said to prefer a further month to train his troops and to mould his staff into a team. The invasion situation would then be clearer. The Foreign Secretary had also been approached, and while he was prepared to

'jump the fence' in August if military reasons made it necessary, he<sup>52</sup>  
also would prefer a postponement.

Churchill did not accept the delay, and sent the memorandum back to the COS asking what would happen if the Germans acted in the<sup>53</sup> interim and, as a result, the British lost the use of Gibraltar. The COS reassured him that, with the strength of the forces now committed to PILGRIM, the islands could be taken regardless of German<sup>54</sup> activities. Churchill was still not completely convinced, and the postponement was discussed at a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting on 1 August 1941. Pound recounted the arguments for postponement, dwelling on the destroyer shortage. The question of carrying out PILGRIM, if necessary, during a period of moonlight was raised, but the COS, considering the operation a hazardous one, were not willing to do this. Churchill in the end agreed to the postponement, and noted that even if the Germans drove the British out of Gibraltar during the intervening period, PILGRIM would have to wait<sup>55</sup> until the September dark period.

On the following day the commanders informed the COS that they had decided that it would be practicable to carry out the operation, if necessary, in conditions of partial moonlight. The number of days each month on which PILGRIM could not be carried out due to moon conditions would be limited to 5. The commanders therefore thought it essential that none of the shipping taking part in LEAP-FROG should be released at the end of the exercise. The COS so

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52. COS(41) 23 Mtg (0) 29 Jul 41, CAB 79/55.

53. Note on Ismay to Churchill 29 Jul 41, PREM 3/361/1.

54. Ismay to Churchill 30 Jul 41, PREM 3/361/1.

55. DO(41) 53 Mtg, Confidential Annex 1 Aug 41, CAB 69/8.



informed Churchill at their next meeting, and the change was  
<sup>56</sup>  
 'cordially approved'. Meanwhile, the Governor of Gibraltar was  
 working on the defences there, including the evacuation of some of  
<sup>57</sup>  
 the support organisation.

As has been noted, the Portuguese Atlantic islands had not been forgotten during the buildup of PUMA and PILGRIM. At the first signs of a deterioration of the situation in Spain, TRUCK and BASEBALL had been put on 48 hours notice, and the JPS report on 23 April 1941, which recommended PUMA, also envisaged the simultaneous execution of BASEBALL. As the forces for TRUCK were to be absorbed into PUMA, it was accepted that the Azores could not longer be taken against opposition. The JPS thought, however, that it would still be desirable to occupy the Azores and Madeira simultaneously with PUMA and BASEBALL. It was considered that a small force, carried in warships, might successfully land in the islands. The JPS felt that the arrival of such a force, backed by the presence of warships in the harbour, might be accepted by the Portuguese garrisons.  
<sup>58</sup>  
 The JPS started working on plans for these operations, the urgency being increased when Sturges announced that, after 6 May 1941, TRUCK force would no longer be at 48 hours notice. During the period when the TRUCK force was being integrated into PUMA, an improvised operation for the capture of the Azores could be mounted at 96 hours notice,  
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 but this would then interfere with the mounting of PUMA. On 5 May 1941 the JPS presented the COS with some suggestions for sending

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56. COS(41) 272 and 274 Mtgs 2 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.

57. See discussion in COS(41) 276 Mtg 5 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.

58. JP(41) 313 'The Atlantic Islands' 23 Apr 41, CAB 79/11.

59. COS(41) 13 Mtg (0) 3 May 41, CAB 79/55.

small forces to the Azores and Madeira, and were instructed to prepare the plans. As in Cane Verdes, these operations were to be conducted with the intention of a peaceful landing.<sup>60</sup> The outline plans were ready by 12 May 1941. The COS accepted them, ordering that the appropriate directives be prepared for the respective commanders and the preparations be put in hand for the despatch of the forces.<sup>61</sup>

During the beginning of May reports were received of the increased defences in the Canaries and thus, when the JPS on 20 May 1941 presented the draft directives to the commanders of the operations against the Azores and Madeira, there was now some doubt as to the basic premise behind the occupation of the Portuguese islands. The COS felt that if PUMA failed they must at least be certain of the other operations. Although it did not seem possible to attack both the Canaries and the Azores in force simultaneously, the COS thought that it might be possible to improvise an operation at short notice, so that if opposition was encountered in the Azores the British would not have to 'withdraw tamely'. The JPS were therefore instructed to put forward proposals for capturing the Azores against opposition, without interfering with PUMA.<sup>62</sup>

On the following day General Giffard, GOC West Africa, saw the COS while on a visit to London. He was satisfied with the preparations for BASEBALL, but wanted to know that would happen when 161st Brigade, earmarked for the operation, was despatched to the Middle East. He did not consider that it would be wise to use the replace-

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60. COS(41) 161 Mtg 5 May 41, CAB 79/11.

61. COS(41) 173 Mtg 12 May 41, CAB 79/11.

62. COS(41) 182 Mtg 20 May 41, CAB 79/11.



ment African troops for the operation, as their participation might be bitterly resented by the Portuguese. Also, if BASEBALL met with opposition, he did not think they were of a sufficiently high standard of training to succeed. The JPS were consequently instructed<sup>63</sup> to see if other forces could be provided for BASEBALL.

The JPS presented their new plans for the Azores and Madeira on 28 May 1941. The COS agreed that the military forces required, a brigade of two battalions for the Azores and a battalion for Madeira, should be assembled, along with the stores and equipment, and prepared for the operations. 1st Guards Brigade was earmarked for this. The forces would be kept at 7 days notice. Although an MT/store ship would be taken up at the first available opportunity, no transports were to be held. Royal Navy ships could be used if necessary. As far as BASEBALL was concerned, the JPS recommended that no special force should be provided after the departure of 161st Brigade. Due to the location of the Cape Verdes, and the minor German threat, it was felt that part of the PUMA forces could be<sup>64</sup> used to occupy the islands after the Canaries were secured. The COS agreed to this, and the GOC West Africa was asked how long he could keep BASEBALL mounted. The GOC informed the War Office that BASEBALL could not be mounted after 9 June 1941, and his formal responsibility for BASEBALL ceased on 10 June 1941. On 9 June 1941 the COS also approved the general plans for the seizure of the Azores against opposition, termed THRUSTER, and instructed the JPS to prepare the directives for the commanders. The COS also considered

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63. COS(41) 183 Mtg 21 May 41, CAB 79/11.

64. COS(41) 192 Mtg 28 May 41, CAB 79/11.

plans for the occupation of Madeira, now by invitation, termed<sup>65</sup>  
 SPRINGBOARD.

These operations were reviewed in a COS meeting with Keyes on 10 June 1941. Keyes thought THRUSTER would have more of a chance if two Belgian LSI(S) previously earmarked for the Mediterranean were made available, and said he would take this up with the joint<sup>66</sup> commanders. SPRINGBOARD seemed to pose little problem. The operations were discussed again at a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting later than night, the one at which PUMA was postponed until July 1941. It was then agreed that the 1st Guards Brigade, earmarked for THRUSTER, should be at 7 days notice from 11 June 1941. A Royal Marine battalion earmarked for SPRINGBOARD was ready then,<sup>67</sup> and could be launched simultaneously with PUMA.

There were some delays with the THRUSTER force, and on 14 June 1941 Rear Admiral A.V. Willis, the naval commander designate, informed the COS that the force could not be considered at less than<sup>68</sup> 14 days notice. On 17 June 1941 the final directives for the commanders of THRUSTER and SPRINGBOARD were ready, and were approved by the COS. The joint commanders of THRUSTER were instructed to consult the DCO and his staff when making their plans. This coordination apparently worked well, as had the PUMA planning under Sturges. SPRINGBOARD was to be under the command of the naval officer detailed, and its commanders were not similarly enjoined to consult with the

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65. Notes to DP, Adm 29 May 41 and to DMO&P 3 Jun 41, WO 106/2948; Telegram WO to GOC West Africa 4 Jun 41 and Commander Sierra Leone Area to WO 5 Jun 41, WO 106/2948; COS(41) 205 Mtg 9 Jun 41, CAB 79/12.

66. COS(41) 207 Mtg 10 Jun 41, CAB 79/12.

67. DO(41) 40 Mtg 10 Jun 41, CAB 69/2.

68. COS(41) 212 Mtg 14 Jun 41, CAB 79/12.



DCO. As SPRINGBOARD was to be a peaceful landing, this was understandable.<sup>69</sup>

On 30 June 1941 Willis and the military commander of THRUSTER, Brigadier V. Copeland-Griffiths, submitted an appreciation in which they maintained that the continued Portuguese strengthening of the defences, in part due to British pressure, and the general tightening up of security, would in time invalidate the basic premise of the THRUSTER plan. They did not think they would be able to establish the troops ashore without a resource to force. They pointed out, however, that the forces involved were hardly strong enough for an opposed landing against 'serious' resistance, and unless the operation took place soon they felt it would be necessary to review the composition of the force. They also considered the naval forces inadequate, and requested the addition of an aircraft carrier - this at the same time the PUMA commanders were requesting a third aircraft carrier.<sup>70</sup> Keyes saw the COS on 3 July 1941 and supported the commanders' opinions on the weakness of the THRUSTER force. He thought that the best possible plan had been made under the circumstances. The COS, however, could not find additional reinforcements<sup>71</sup> for the operation.

Towards the end of July 1941 the apparent worsening position in Spain caused the COS to concentrate on PUMA. This was after Alexander had assumed command and requested the addition of another brigade to his force. Keyes and the joint commanders of THRUSTER met the COS on 22 July 1941 to consider the position. The COS felt that with the

69. COS(41) 214 Mtg 17 Jun 41, CAB 79/12 and COS(41) 108 (0) 'Atlantic Islands' 18 Jun 41, CAB 80/58.

70. COS(41) 122 (0) 'Operation THRUSTER' 30 Jun 41, CAB 80/58.

71. COS(41) 223 Mtg 3 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.

increase in the Portuguese defences and the tightening of security it seemed unlikely that the Germans could effect a landing in the Azores. For the same reasons it was agreed that the THRUSTER force was insufficient for the task, and it was argued that the forces allocated for the operation could be used with better effect in PUMA. In any event, if PUMA were to be reinforced to the extent considered necessary, the landing craft and naval escorts were unlikely to be found for a simultaneous landing in the Portuguese Atlantic islands. If THRUSTER was put off until after PUMA, SPRINGBOARD would also be unnecessary. The COS therefore decided that THRUSTER and SPRINGBOARD forces would be used to reinforce PUMA, and that these operations would, if necessary, be carried out after PUMA.<sup>72</sup> Operations against the Portuguese Atlantic islands, which had been mounted in one form or another since the summer of 1940, were thus at an end. It would not be until early 1942 that they would re-emerge.

One of the alternatives to British operations against the Atlantic islands occasionally suggested was the involvement of the United States. First direct mention of this occurred on 24 April 1941, when Rear Admiral Robert Ghormley of the United States Navy, serving as an observer in London, asked the COS what plans the British had for the occupation of the Azores and Cape Verdes if the Germans invaded Spain or Portugal. On 5 May 1941 the COS agreed to inform him of the British intention to seize the islands.<sup>73</sup> The British had earlier told the United States that there were no plans for the occupation of the Canaries, and when

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72. COS(41) 20 Mtg (0) 22 Jul 41, CAB 79/55.

73. COS(41) 73 (0) 'Spain: Plan if Axis Invades' 4 May 41 and COS(41) 75 (0) 'Spain: Plan if Axis Invades' 5 May 41, CAB 80/57. Ghormley had come in August 1940. See R.E. Lee, The London Observer (London 1972), edited by J. Leutze, for details.



on 7 May 1941 the JPS suggested that Ghormley be informed that the British were reconsidering their interests in this area, the COS replied that they did not think it necessary unless PUMA were<sup>74</sup> definitely decided upon.

The United States was working on its own plans at this time. The 1st Marine Division, on the east coast, had been earmarked for landing operations, and on 27 May 1941 the 2nd Marine Division in California was also instructed to provide a reinforced regiment for expeditionary duty in the Atlantic. The most probable missions appeared to be either the occupation of Martinique or of the Azores. As the American intelligence indicated that Germans would soon invade Russia, however, the American feeling was that this would cancel any immediate threat to Gibraltar and render the Azores venture pointless. Roosevelt therefore ordered a suspension of the Azores planning on 7 June 1941, and the reinforced regiment earmarked for it was shortly<sup>75</sup> thereafter ordered to move to Iceland. No mention of the American project appears in the British military records.

By 23 June 1941 the COS decided that the Joint Staff Mission in Washington should inform the Americans of the planned operations<sup>76</sup> against the Canaries. The subject of the Atlantic islands was one of those covered in the talks between Churchill and Roosevelt at the

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74. COS(41) 165 Mtg 7 May 41, CAB 79/11.

75. LTC K.J. Clifford, The U.S. Marine Corps in Iceland 1941-1942 (HQ USMC 1970), pp. 3-4. For American planning in general see S. Conn and B. Fairchild, The Framework of Hemisphere Defense (Washington 1960). British-American Planning is covered in M. Matloff and E. Snell, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1941-1942 (Washington 1953).

76. COS(41) 221 Mtg 23 Jun 41, CAB 79/12. Churchill had informed Roosevelt personally about all the operations on 29 May 41. See Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence, edited by F. Loewenheim, H. Langley and M. Jonas (London 1975), pp. 143-144.

RIVIERA Conference. Salazar had contacted Roosevelt regarding the Portuguese government's plans to move to the Azores in the event of a German invasion. While he was relying on British assistance he would, if they were occupied elsewhere, willingly accept American help. Roosevelt was agreeable to this. Churchill explained PILGRIM, which might precipitate a crisis, but Roosevelt said that, even if the British acted first, it would not affect his responsibility to Portugal. Roosevelt discussed the earlier American plans for occupying the Azores, and agreed to have a force in readiness for this operation by mid-September. The COS welcomed any relief from their commitments, and it was decided that the British should change their policy in regard to Portugal, and encourage Salazar to seek American assistance.<sup>77</sup> The Portuguese problem was thus laid to rest.

Keyes had been cut off from the planning and preparations for PILGRIM since the arrival of Alexander. With the successive postponements of PUMA and then PILGRIM, he was becoming convinced that this operation would never take place, and he feared that his original concept for a striking force prepared for any operation that might be opportune had been lost. The indefinite holding of the PILGRIM force would prevent any useful offensive operations being undertaken against the Germans. He wrote to Ismay about this on 6 August 1941. Now that the Germans were deeply involved in the Soviet Union, he thought the time ripe for offensive action by Britain. He suggested a raid on the French coast, but admitted that it was a limited operation. While this was all the British could do on the Continent itself, he thought that the British had the power to deliver a 'considerable stroke overseas' if the whole of the amphibious striking

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77. COS(41) 25 Mtg (0) 12 Aug 41, CAB 79/55 and WM(41) 84 Mtg 19 Aug 41, CAB 65/20.



force was used. The previous plan for the capture of Sardinia might prove an attractive proposition. PILGRIM force, with a few extra units that were available, was capable of seizing and holding the island, and he thought it doubtful that the Germans would be able to offer substantial resistance. Considerable pressure could thus be exerted upon the enemy in the western Mediterranean without the involvement of the British forces already there. 'Events may move very rapidly now, and I suggest that PILGRIM force should not be held inactive for any one object, since it is the only amphibious force we possess, or can possess for a long time to come'.<sup>78</sup> This was a valid point, and was to lead to another confrontation.

There were others who doubted that PILGRIM would ever take place. MO 1 cast covetous eyes at the shipping being tied up, thinking of its usefulness in the Middle East reinforcement programme. Various sections of the War Office had been asked to examine what effect an increase in the programme would have on the strategic situation in the Middle East, and whether it would justify pressing for the release of the shipping instead of holding it 'for the various attractive - if not altogether sound - projects which may also be competitors'.<sup>79</sup>

Keyes met the COS to discuss his views later on 6 August 1941. It was agreed that the JPS should consider what operations might usefully be undertaken by the force during the following six months, assuming that the situation in Spain improved and that Axis morale showed definite signs of deterioration. No detailed plans were to be prepared. Keyes was also authorised to discuss his proposals for a raid on the French coast with the PILGRIM commanders.<sup>80</sup> On 19 August

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78. Keyes to Ismay 6 Aug 41, K 13/19.

79. MO 1 to MO 5, SD 2 19 Aug 41, WO 193/794.

80. COS(41) 278 Mtg 6 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.

Keyes therefore explained to Alexander his concept of a striking force, and included the proposal for Sardinia as well as the raid in France.<sup>81</sup> Alexander did not prove forthcoming, however. Although he read Keyes' papers 'with interest', he did not feel he could give a useful opinion of either project without more detailed intelligence on the latest enemy situation, including aerial photographs. He was also very wary about committing himself on the question of the strategic advantages of such an operation - 'this again can only be<sup>82</sup> assessed by those who have full access to all information'. Alexander, on the joint commanders' last visit to London, had failed to call on Keyes, and Keyes was 'very disappointed that Alexander won't play'. Keyes still considered Alexander the right man for the job, but was upset at being cut off from the amphibious force. 'I have not been invited to have anything to do with PILGRIM force since the COS gave their instructions to the joint commanders about a month ago', he noted on 22 August 1941. Once again, Keyes felt that the opportunity to strike an offensive blow was being lost through<sup>83</sup> failure to properly prepare the means.

The joint commanders themselves were beginning to have doubts about PILGRIM, albeit for other reasons. On 14 August 1941 they submitted a paper to the COS showing the deterioration of the weather conditions on passage as the months went by. The disparate size, seaworthiness, propulsion, and endurance of the ships now allocated to the operation would cause great difficulties if any substantial bad weather was encountered. The increasing probability of this, if

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81. Keyes to Alexander 19 Aug 41, DEFE 2/698.

82. Alexander to Keyes 21 Aug 41, DEFE 2/698.

83. Keyes to Ismay 22 Aug 41 and Keyes to Alexander 22 Aug 41, DEFE 2/698.



the operation was delayed until October, would thus pose an additional hazard 'of very grave concern'. The commanders noted, in closing, 'that PILGRIM has been compared with the Spanish Armada, of which it<sup>84</sup> has been written "The winds blew and they were scattered"', They were also very concerned about the changes in the composition of the force, most of which in isolation appeared minor, but whose cumulative<sup>85</sup> effect was important. Both of these complaints received sympathy at least in the War Office, and it was clear that a decision would soon have to be made whether PILGRIM would be launched in 1941, as well<sup>86</sup> as what priority the PILGRIM force should have.

The COS met the joint commanders on 20 August 1941 to resolve these questions. Earlier in the meeting the COS had spoken to the military attaché to Madrid, Brigadier Torr, who was home on a visit. This was apparently the first time that they had had an opportunity to hear his views, which were more optimistic than most of those prevailing in London. Torr thought that Franco would not let the Germans enter Spain as long as the British held on to Egypt, and that the Germans were not prepared to force their way in. A premature attack on the Atlantic islands, however, would change all this. He felt that the disadvantages of such a course of action far outweighed the advantages. When the COS saw the joint commanders Pound was therefore able to stress the undesirability of a premature decision to launch PILGRIM, which would result in the loss of Gibraltar and severely damage both trade and the Middle East position. The British could not

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84. COS(41) 171 (0) 'Weather Conditions on Passage' 14 Aug 41, CAB 80/59.

85. COS(41) 174 (0) 'Operation PILGRIM' 18 Aug 41, CAB 80/59.

86. WO Brief on COS(41) 171 (0) 19 Aug 41, WO 106/2953 and WO Brief on COS(41) 174 (0) 19 Aug 41, WO 106/2953.

afford to be forced into the operation solely because the weather conditions precluded them from carrying it out later in the year. He went on to suggest some alternatives, such as mounting the operation from the West Indies. The COS did grant some naval reinforcements, and the Admiralty was asked to examine some of the other organisational difficulties facing the commanders. They in turn were to investigate further alternatives along the lines suggested by Pound.<sup>87</sup>

Hamilton produced a new proposal on 22 August 1941. He was convinced that it was impracticable to sail the whole convoy from the United Kingdom during the winter months. Alternatives that had been looked at were the sailing of the expedition from Bermuda or Trinidad and the use of either Gibraltar or Freetown as a base. The first two options were ruled out because there were not enough facilities for the forces involved, and the refuelling problem would remain. The third was ruled out because Gibraltar might not be available when it was needed. The fourth, which involved sailing the 'Maracaibos', smaller transports, and ships of the slow convoy, with the full complement of landing craft but minus the troops, to Freetown, to be joined by the main convoy when the operation was ordered, looked more promising. Some minor adjustments would have to be made in the shipping and escort arrangements, but it would allow PILGRIM to remain at four to five weeks notice throughout the winter. The concentration at Freetown might be taken as a prelude to another assault on Dakar, which would provide good cover for the operation. Alexander agreed with this recommendation, and it was presented as a

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87. COS(41) 26 Mtg (0) 20 Aug 41, CAB 79/55.



joint paper.

The COS examined this proposal on 27 August 1941. The War Office had opposed the idea, as with the long notice required it was quite possible that the Germans could occupy the Canaries first. Naval considerations, however, were to remain the governing factor. After some discussion the COS agreed that Hamilton's proposal was the only way of keeping PILGRIM mounted during the winter months. Hamilton pressed for an immediate decision, but he was asked to provide, in consultation with the Naval Staff, further details on the implications of the proposal, in regard both to the size of the force which would be sent to Freetown, and to the effect on the availability of equipment for combined operations training in the United Kingdom. The COS were also concerned about the effect on the availability of forces for other raiding operations, and the JPS were tasked to cover this in the course of the preparation of a report on assistance to the

Soviet Union.

Hamilton quickly provided the COS with details of the force to be sent to Freetown. The possibility of mounting a major operation on the Continent to relieve the Soviet Union was regarded as unrealistic, and so on that same day the COS agreed that PILGRIM should remain mounted during the winter. They approved, in principle, the sending of the shipping Hamilton had listed to Freetown. The decision would be confirmed by the Defence Committee (Operations), and in the meanwhile the DCO was to be informed. Considering that the shipping to be sent to Freetown included both Dutch LSI(M), the

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88. COS(41) 177 (0) 'Operation PILGRIM' 22 Aug 41, CAB 80/59.

89. WO Brief on COS(41) 177 (0) 25 Aug 41, WO 193/794 and COS(41) 298 Mtg 27 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.

commissioned transports Royal Scotsman, Royal Ulsterman, and Ulster Monarch, the 'Maracaibos' Misoa and Bachequero, and the LSG Dewdale<sup>90</sup> and Ennerdale, this certainly was a matter of interest to Keyes.

Keyes had not been consulted before the COS made this decision, nor did they wait to receive his comments before they discussed it with Churchill and Eden. Churchill, on 28 August 1941, 'welcomed' the idea, for if it had been found impracticable to carry out PILGRIM during the winter, he would have been forced to make a very difficult decision, and 'might have made a false move'. Eden supported the proposal, as he felt that the situation in Spain could readily deteriorate in the autumn, and it would be 'an enormous advantage' if the British could avoid making the first move. Agreement was therefore reached that the smaller ships should be sent to Freetown as soon as escort could be found, with the proviso that the operation<sup>91</sup> should be kept at short notice during the changeover.

Hollis informed Keyes of this decision the same day, noting that 'the consequences of this decision will need a little thinking out, and I am sure that the COS would wish to have your views when convenient'.<sup>92</sup> Keyes replied immediately that a good part of the assault shipping available for operations in home waters or the Mediterranean would thus 'be withdrawn to lie idle'. The sending of both available tank assault ships would seriously reduce the impact of any landing contemplated in the future. The shipping of the 44 landing craft involved would not only seriously curtail any offensive operations in home waters, but would also greatly interfere with the combined operations training programme the War Office had requested. The gradual

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90. COS(41) 28 Mtg (0) 27 Aug 41, CAB 79/55.

91. COS(41) 29 Mtg (0) 28 Aug 41, CAB 79/55.

92. Hollis to Keyes 28 Aug 41, K 13/9.



deterioration of the condition of the force while at Freetown had also to be considered.<sup>93</sup> For a second time, Keyes felt that the only available striking force was being uselessly broken up.

Nevertheless, the COS proceeded with the implementation of the decision, seeing the PILGRIM commanders and the EPS the morning of 29 August 1941 to work out further details. Most of these were minor, although the COS accepted the new estimate that, under this plan, the assault could not take place until 32 days after the decision was made. The PILGRIM commanders were asked also to frame recommendations for the administration and training of the PILGRIM force in the United Kingdom during the winter months. It was in this connection, and only in this connection, that Keyes was invited to meet the COS and the commanders the next day.<sup>94</sup>

Keyes was meanwhile thinking along broader lines, and he returned to his earlier ideas on alternative employments for the PILGRIM force. He was critical of the offensive plans then being considered by the JPS, all of which went into 1942, and which required larger forces than were likely to be available. He therefore stressed that 'practically the whole of our means of prosecuting amphibious warfare has been absorbed into the PILGRIM expedition, which may never be necessary'. By this time Keyes no longer believed in the practicability of PILGRIM, given the conditions likely to be encountered, and he again pressed for the use of the force for operations such as an assault on Cherbourg, or against Sardinia. He was convinced that the Germans were being over-stretched in the Soviet Union, and that the time was opportune

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93. Keyes to COS 28 Aug 41, K 13/9.

94. COS(41) 30 Mtg (0) 29 Aug 41, CAB 79/55.

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 for offensive action. Hollis' note on the COS decision to disperse the force, sent after the 29 August COS meeting, therefore upset Keyes a great deal. Characteristically, he was at first inclined to go directly to Churchill, but he told Hollis that 'before appealing to the Prime Minister and placing the facts - as I see them - before him, I am of course ready to give my views to the COS and let them know what I propose to say to him - if I consider it necessary'.<sup>96</sup>

Keyes and the PILGRIM commanders met the COS on the morning of 30 August 1941. Pound explained the background behind the decision, including the fact that the JPS had looked, without results, for alternative operations. There was no operation on the Continent that would materially assist the Soviet Union, and 'there was no question of launching an expedition merely for the sake of finding employment for these well-trained and well-equipped amphibian forces'. Pound considered that, if the PILGRIM force was eventually to be used for operations in the Mediterranean or North Africa, it would be just as well to get the slow and less seaworthy ships south of the Bay of Biscay before the bad weather set in. Keyes replied that he 'quite understood' the reason for the decision, although he had not been consulted. He 'strongly disagreed', however, with locking up valuable shipping at Freetown, possibly for the whole winter. He thought that the opportunity to capture the Canaries had passed, but that the rapidly changing situation on the Continent might provide new opportunities which must be grasped. The COS 'took note' of Keyes' objections and alternative proposals, but the decision stood.<sup>97</sup>

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95. COS(41) 184 (0) 'Alternative Employment of PILGRIM force' 29 Aug 41, CAB 79/55.

96. Keyes to Hollis 29 Aug 41, K 13/9.

97. COS(41) 31 Mtg (0) 30 Aug 41, CAB 79/55.



Keyes reminded the COS later that day that he still disagreed with the breaking up of the force, and on 2 September 1941 he sent a letter to Churchill, with a copy to the COS, registering his protest. He pointed out that the decision had been arrived at on the advice of Hamilton, without reference to himself, and was based on two assumptions - that PILGRIM as constituted could capture Gran Canary by assault during the winter months, and that no effective use could be made of the amphibious striking force at home or in the Mediterranean during the winter months - with which he could not agree. Furthermore, he complained that Churchill had made the final decision before the DCO had even heard of the plan. Keyes went on to say that he was <sup>98</sup> 'impelled, as DCO' to put these views before Churchill. Churchill did see Keyes briefly on 4 September 1941, but remained firm. Churchill was concerned, however, about Keyes' assertions that a beach assault on the Canaries, without any prospect of surprise, 'would be bloodily repulsed'.

A meeting was therefore held at No. 10 Downing Street on 9 September 1941, with Churchill, the COS, Keyes and the commanders present. The first matter taken up was the feasibility of PILGRIM. This hinged on the interpretation of recent information received on the defences in the Canaries. It was apparent that Keyes gave more credence to unconfirmed reports than the COS or the commanders did, and it was also disclosed that Keyes had not been made aware of the latest increase in the naval forces allocated to the operation. Churchill supported the commanders. There was little further argument on the point, as indeed the responsibility of the commanders had always been one of Keyes' principles. The next question was the decision to split up the assault

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98. Keyes to Churchill 2 Sep 41, PREM 3/361/1.

shipping. Keyes maintained that the five fast transports were capable of making the passage to the Canaries in bad weather, whereas some of the shipping which was being left in the United Kingdom was not. The joint commanders replied that the decision had been taken on the recommendation of the Director of Naval Construction at the Admiralty. Keyes had in mind an alternative plan of taking the Canaries by force majeure, which would avoid having to send the tank assault ships to Freetown, but this idea was lost as a result of interruptions during his explanation. Keyes then complained once more about not having been consulted beforehand. When Churchill asked Pound why this had not been done, Pound replied that it was a matter 'of strategy and seamanship, as opposed to the technical details of the landing', and pointed out that Keyes had been present on all the occasions when the latter had been discussed. Here was the nub of the argument. Churchill backed Keyes on the principle, stating that 'it was quite right for the DCO to give his opinion on the chances of success of a combined operation and having done so he was relieved from all responsibility should the operation be launched'. On the matter in hand, however, Churchill saw it as essential that the government be in a position to launch PILGRIM during the winter, and so, unless the COS upon reflection considered the course unnecessary, the arrangements for sending part of the PILGRIM force to Freetown would remain. This was a very unusual meeting, in that Keyes attached such importance to it that he requested to see the draft minutes, and then insisted on submitting long and detailed corrections to them. The minutes were finally issued five days after the meeting took place.



During the course of another meeting with the COS on the following morning, 10 September 1941, Keyes again requested that the five assault transports remain in the United Kingdom. Showing great persistence, he insisted that this would not jeopardise PILGRIM, and indeed said that it appeared improbable to him that such an exceedingly difficult and complicated operation could succeed under the new arrangements. Keyes had written another note to Churchill telling him this. It was too late for such arguments, however, and the decision was upheld.<sup>100</sup>

Keyes refused to give up, and on 12 September 1941 he told Hollis he was still working on his alternative plan, and hoping that the Admiralty would retain at least the two Dutch LSI(M).<sup>101</sup>

The process of minor alterations to the PILGRIM shipping continued unabated, as the Ministry of War Transport continued to demand the release of shipping that was lying idle. On 1 September 1941 it was agreed that four of the hired transports would be replaced by slower ships. Two of the seven MT ships could also be released, providing that others could be taken up at short notice, even though three replacements for an earlier trade had not yet been given. By this time the other shipping had sailed to Freetown, except for the Misoa and Bachequero, delayed by mechanical defects, and the Royal Ulsterman, which needed repairs. The shipping situation was definitely getting a bit untidy.<sup>102</sup>

With the sailing of the assault shipping, Keyes had to admit defeat. He was now more than ever convinced that PILGRIM, spread as

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100. COS(41) 319 Mtg 10 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.

101. Keyes to Hollis 12 Sep 41, K 140/3/3.

102. COS(41) 323 Mtg 15 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.

it was over 3,000 miles, was 'sheer folly'. He therefore suggested that the remainder of the shipping held for PILGRIM, except for the assault shipping, be released for service of national importance.

The assault shipping, with a few MT vessels, could assemble in Loch  
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 Fyne for training by the VACTC. Ismay stopped this note before it reached the Prime Minister, telling Keyes that he was sure Churchill would not forego the possibility of PILGRIM, despite all the  
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 attendant difficulties.

Keyes was determined - on 17 September he wrote to Eden, pressing his alternative. Although he had, according to the 9 September meeting, been relieved of all responsibility, he told Eden 'I cannot divest myself of the responsibility of trying to prevent what I con-  
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 sider may well result in another misadventure'. Eden sent a diplomatic reply, saying that he would study Keyes' proposals, though  
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 'happily the Spanish position seems to be improving'.

PILGRIM thus remained mounted through the autumn, though minor changes in the shipping were to occur. The Ministry of War Transport on 29 September 1941 obtained the release of certain of the shipping  
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 for local use, with the proviso that they remain at 21 days notice. The Karanja and Kenya were put into dock for repairs during October,  
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 which placed them on 31 days notice. By this time, however, it was becoming apparent that PILGRIM, as Keyes had thought, would not take

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103. COS(41) 202 (0) 'PILGRIM - Shipping' 16 Sep 41, CAB 80/59.

104. Ismay to Keyes 16 Sep 41, K 13/9.

105. Keyes to Eden 17 Sep 41, K 13/15.

106. Eden to Keyes 18 Sep 41, K 13/15.

107. COS(41) 336 Mtg 29 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.

108. COS(41) 341 Mtg 3 Oct 40, CAB 79/14.



place, and the troops and shipping earmarked for it were allocated to a number of other concurrent operations.

The COS, on 30 October 1941, considered whether it was advisable to reconstitute the PILGRIM force or to use the troops and shipping  
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for an active raiding programme. The decision was made on 5 November 1941 that the raiding programme was to have priority, and the PILGRIM forces were thus no longer to be held at short notice. That the decision was made at the COS level, rather than that of the Defence Committee (Operations), is a good indication of the lower  
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priority now accorded PILGRIM. The infantry assault ships and transports at Freetown were then allotted to TRUNCHEON - a raiding operation against Italy, and only the difficulty in providing transports prevented them from sailing to Gibraltar before TRUNCHEON was  
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cancelled. The JPS considered the general distribution of assault shipping and landing craft in a paper on 30 November. They recommended that the shipping for PILGRIM be kept in home waters, though the 'Maracaibos' should be sent to the Middle East. This would result in the British being unable to fully remount PILGRIM until January 1942, when the third 'Maracaibo' was commissioned. The JPS, owing to a shortage of MLC at home, also wanted the two MLC carriers at Freetown returned to the United Kingdom. The COS realised that this would in effect mean totally dismounting PILGRIM until the spring, and they thought that the British could not afford to take such a risk. On 3 December 1941 the COS therefore decided that though the 'Maracaibos' could go to the Middle East, the two MLC carriers must remain at

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109. COS(41) 372 Mtg 30 Oct 41, CAB 79/15.

110. COS(41) 277 Mtg 5 Nov 41, CAB 79/15.

111. JP(41) 1003 'Operations TRUNCHEON, ANKLET, BRACELET, STUMPER, WALLAH, and GYMNAST' 24 Nov 41, CAB 84/37.

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Freetown. PILGRIM, though technically mounted, had by this time assumed a very low priority.

The cancellation of TRUNCHEON on 3 December 1941 released the assault shipping for return to PILGRIM, but on 8 December 1941 the COS told the JPS to consider the forces previously designated for TRUNCHEON to be available for BONUS, an operation against Madagas-

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car. PILGRIM and BONUS would thus be competing operations. This problem of trying to conduct offensive operations while at the same time having contingency forces available to counter a German threat to Gibraltar was never to be satisfactorily resolved, and was to continue, through a whole series of new plans, until the invasion of North Africa in November 1942.

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112. JP(41) 1017 'Future Distribution of Landing Craft and Assault Ships' 30 Nov 41, CAB 84/37 and COS(41) 406 Mtg 3 Dec 41, CAB 79/16.

113. COS(41) 412 Mtg 8 Dec 41 CAB 79/16.



CHAPTER XVICONCLUSIONS

During the period from Dunkirk to Pearl Harbor, British grand strategy for the defeat of Germany, as evidenced in the War Cabinet paper of May 1940, the JPS paper of September 1940, and the COS RIVIERA paper of July 1941, rested firmly on the triad of blockade, bombing, and subversion. Although, from the end of 1940, a return to the Continent in the final phase was forecast, and initial estimates of requirements made, the combined operations policy in force, from the detailing of troops for contingency operations against the Azores and Cape Verdes in June 1940 to the breakup of the force earmarked for the seizure of the Canaries in the fall of 1941, so that the elements involved could be used for an active raiding programme, envisaged a long-range amphibious assault of up to a corps size against outlying enemy possessions. A substantial amount of effort, both in terms of time and resources, was put into this form of operation, with extremely meagre results. The only true combined operation, as opposed to a raid, during this period was the abortive assault on Dakar, and this was an ad hoc affair mounted even before the policy was formalised in September 1940.

The combined operations organisation, developed during this period, provided the basis for the invasion of Normandy in 1944, and there is no dispute that victory would not have been possible without it. These latter events, however, were in the context of the Anglo-American prosecution of the war. The results of the earlier combined operations policy of the 'British war', the object of this study,

would certainly seem to be a disappointment. As noted in the introduction, little would be served by an espousal of alternative policies. Indeed, it would be rather arrogant of the historian to do so. The concern here is whether the policy actually adopted was developed and prosecuted in the most effective manner, in a sense, whether the rational influence was the predominant. The contention here is that it was not, and that the decision-taking process was markedly hindered by organisational and personal influences, rendering the efficient use of the resources available an unattainable goal.

The justification of this contention can be seen by the examination of the policy and material development, organisation, and operations undertaken. The policy would seem to be the fundamental component, from which all the other aspects would develop, but there was a surprising lack of a well-staffed and coherent policy. The preparations prior to Dunkirk had envisaged a raiding capability of a four-battalion Royal Marine Brigade, or of a divisional assault by two army brigades. There is no evidence of any plans being developed which might require this capability, and the material procurement was on a rather low priority. The months after Dunkirk were a time of flux, and the assault on Dakar was mounted without any regard to a combined operations policy or organisation, and indeed with little regard for the service planning system then in effect. The first outline of a policy was produced by the JPS on 4 September 1940, but this was only in the briefest detail and without any specific aim in mind. This paper, the only one taken up at the Defence Committee (Operations) level, had been overtaken by events even as it was con-



sidered, and was never given full endorsement as a policy.

The newly-formed FOPS was given a speculative list of operations in September 1940, from which the material requirements for an assault by a corps of two divisions, supported by armour, in either the Middle East or staged from home waters, were developed. Though this was first outlined in October of 1940, the priority was such that it was not issued as a COS document until January 1941. Even then, the army and air elements called for were never established, and the only concrete result was the production of the assault shipping and craft required. By the time the RIVIERA paper was produced, in July of 1941, this scant reference to combined operations had been reduced to a mention of the need to secure the Canaries. Prior to the development of this capability for a corps assault, the general policy, developed in the series of meetings in September of 1940, had been to give priority to a division assault in the Middle East, with a possible division assault being mounted from home waters. There was never a formal document on this, nor were any detailed proposals for the use of such a capability ever sent to London by the Middle East.

The above is the sum total of study and documentation for a policy which provided the only true offensive use of British land forces other than in the Western Desert. There was scant investigation of the final aim, little examination and development in detail, no formal approval at all levels, virtually no coordination with the Adviser to the Chiefs of Staff on Combined Operations, and no follow-up. The Middle East Command, one of the principal beneficiaries, had little

interest or involvement, the Admiralty had other priorities, and the Air Ministry was clearly antipathetic. The overall combined operations policy was, on balance, a shaky foundation on which to build an organisation and from which to mount operations, a condition which must be ascribed to organisational deficiencies.

The absence of a clear combined operations policy affected the development of a combined operations organisation. The Directorate of Combined Operations was founded at a time when Churchill had just taken over the reins of government, a period in which he was rather distrustful of the ability of the service machinery to produce bold offensive action. Churchill's co-opting of the Joint Planners in August and September of 1940, and the development of the planning organisation, gave him, as Minister of Defence, a direct link into the planning system. While this was not fully agreeable to the service machinery, it gave Churchill an outlet for his designs, and to a great extent stopped his habit of disregarding the established channels.

The initial concepts of the Directorate of Combined Operations and the scaling down of its responsibilities in drawing up the first directive, owing to the opposition of service organisations, have been detailed. The replacement of Bourne by Keyes was justified by the declaration of a greatly increased responsibility to be given to the position. One of the major organisational faults of that time was the failure to revise the limited directive inherited from Bourne, which gave a very restrictive raiding role and an ill-defined advisory role on combined operations. Churchill's opposition to small raids,



the only type the British were capable of at the time, virtually prevented an operational role for the Directorate. The failure to study the advisory role, and to answer a number of key questions in its implementation, prevented this from becoming a focus of effort.

One of the fundamental problems in the advisory role was the failure to tie the Directorate in to the service planning system. Planning papers were not circulated to the Directorate as a matter of course, with the result being that Directorate disagreement with plans was often first apparent at the COS level. The desire of the planners to keep an outside agency, with whom they were often in conflict, out of their deliberations can be understood, but the subsequent confrontations at the COS caused great difficulty, and did much to damage the credibility of both sides in respect to the other. The directives, admittedly, did state that the Directorate should be consulted when an opposed landing was under consideration, by both the planners and the appointed commanders, but it was left up to the consideration of the individuals involved, again often in conflict with the Directorate, when this should be done. There was no arbiter, other than the COS, and the Directorate was certainly of the opinion, justified in many cases, that it was being disregarded by the planners. Keyes' attempts to have a rehearsal of the planning system are a good example of this. Personalities often played a major role here, as can be seen by the change in climate after Alexander had replaced Sturges as the military commander for PILGRIM. Even in cases where there was consultation, no attention had been given to the situation in which there was a disagreement between the Directorate and the

planners. This was brought up in the discussion of the fourth directive, when the service machinery maintained that the Directorate, having offered its advice, had no further responsibility, even when the advice was disregarded. It will be remembered that Churchill sided with the Directorate. This still produced no resolution of the problem, however, and it would not be until some time after the period studied that a Combined Operations Planner became a regular part of the Joint Planning Staff. This logical solution was never considered during the period studied. The antagonism between the Directorate and the planning system, particularly when Keyes was the Director, would probably have prevented such a step in any case.

The operational responsibilities of the Directorate were always rather uncertain. The directives should have made them clear enough, but the desire for offensive action of both Churchill and Keyes, action which was not possible under the terms of the directives, often caused responsibilities to be assigned in contravention of the restrictions. Churchill often went directly to Keyes, particularly in the period before he had firmly established his own planning system. Keyes had just taken over in July 1940 when Churchill went to him for large raids of 5,000 to 10,000 men. Churchill, who had initially gone outside the planning system in initiating the Dakar operation, went outside the system again when he considered letting Keyes carry out MENACE in August 1940. In September of 1940 Churchill went to Keyes for an operation against Casablanca and for one against the Channel Islands. His giving the command of WORKSHOP to Keyes, with no reference to the COS, is perhaps the most flagrant violation of the directive in



force, and set the stage for a dispute between Pound and Keyes that was as much personal as principled. The initial arrangements for the buildup of a new striking force in the United Kingdom in February and March 1941 also implied a combined operations responsibility that went beyond the directive.

The circumstances of his original appointment, and all the incidents noted above, certainly went far to justify Keyes' opinion that the Director of Combined Operations had rather extensive powers in respect to combined operations, no matter what the wording of the directives. This was, de facto, true during the summer and fall of 1940, when Keyes had rather easy direct access to Churchill. As time went on, and Churchill's planning system took hold, this access was steadily reduced. Churchill still stood as the arbiter in most of the disputes, however, and it is notable that it was Churchill himself who drew up the second directive in February 1941. The root of the problem had been recognised as early as November 1940 by Ismay, who noted that the responsibilities of the Directorate and the service machinery were hard to define precisely, and that there would always be an overlap. Ismay's solution, requiring a 'spirit of give and take', was, considering the split between Keyes and Pound in particular, hardly feasible, and must have been recognised as such at the time. In any event, the problem having been identified, Churchill must bear a good deal of responsibility for allowing it to continue for a further twelve months. With the concept of his role as seen by Keyes, any attempts by the COS to limit his responsibility was regarded as an unwarranted usurpation of the authority vested in him by Churchill, whereas, in the concept as seen by the COS, Keyes' claims were beyond the scope of his directives and were disruptive of the normal service planning process. There could, con-

sidering the personalities involved, be no reconciliation of these responsibilities. Churchill often used his drive and powers of persuasion to foist unwanted schemes on the COS, but he was not one to go against the determined opposition of his professional advisors. On the other hand, the period under consideration was marked by a singular attitude of caution, and a lack of offensive operations. This proved a great frustration to Churchill, making him susceptible to Keyes' similar opinions of the effectiveness of the service machinery. The result was that neither side could claim a decisive influence. WORKSHOP is an excellent example. It is clear that the services opposed the operation, particularly with Keyes in command, and used all the negative power of the machinery to obstruct it. As the COS had to maintain their position as the sole source of strategic advice to the Prime Minister, this was understandable. Although one can not argue with their evaluation of the strategic worth of the operation, the constant delay did result in the one thing feared and predicted by Keyes, forestallment by German action. It is hard not to sympathise with the resultant frustration of both Churchill and Keyes.

Given a vague policy and a faulty organisation, problems would have arisen with any combined operations considered at this time. As has been noted, MENACE was an ad hoc operation mounted without regard to either overall policy or the Directorate of Combined Operations, but it was, paradoxically, the only combined operation ever mounted during this period. The fact that, apart from MENACE, the entire amphibious assault capability of the United Kingdom was locked up from June of 1940 to October of 1941 for contingency operations



in the Atlantic against neutral powers, in anticipation of German initiatives, poses questions as to the viability of the strategy as a whole. This is a subject to be taken in the wider context of the war, and will not be addressed here. This situation, however, was to have a number of effects on the organisation for combined operations, revealing other organisational defects not properly anticipated or resolved.

In respect to the material development aspect of the advisory role of the Directorate, little was done. Experimentation had a low priority, while overall requirements, except for the periods mentioned, were firmly in the hands of the service planning system. The Directorate control of the combined operations training establishments, however, was to be of much greater importance. Two contrasting concepts gradually evolved. The planning system had originally envisaged that commanders and troops would be detailed for a specific operation, the forces would be trained in amphibious techniques by the establishments under the Directorate, and the operations would be undertaken. This rapid process, which occurred in the case of Dakar, would have papered over some of the organisational flaws. The holding of all the amphibious forces in readiness for long periods, however, enhanced the conflict between the Directorate, which wanted to keep the forces under its control while training, and the commanders, who were loath to give up control of the forces to an outside agency. While Keyes himself always upheld the primacy of the commander's control, the fact was that, as can be seen in PILGRIM, the assault shipping and landing craft, as they became available, were detailed

to the ever-growing force held in readiness. This severely reduced the forces available to Keyes for raiding and, in the immediate context, also caused problems in the material for training. Large-scale amphibious operations with the new equipment were something that was still in evolution. The training establishment and the forces held in readiness, over time, thus became competing agencies, both in regard to material and to the position of being the final arbiter on technique. This was the root cause of the confrontation over LEAPFROG. This duality was never satisfactorily solved in this period, and caused a considerable diversion from the overall effort.

The operations which have been covered are all those for which troops were detailed, but there were plans considered for many more. This brought up another difference in concept between Keyes and the planning staffs. During this period the planning staffs held generally to the principle that the forces were tailored for each particular operation, and could not be used as a general-purpose amphibious force. Keyes, particularly after he obtained control of the Glens and the commandos for WORKSHOP, began to develop the idea that this was a general-purpose amphibious striking force, capable of being used for any of the operations then being considered. This concept extended to that of a standard load for the shipping, as can be seen in the dispute over the assignment of one of his Glens to BRISK in December of 1940. This concept was resisted by the planning system. No clear reasons are apparent, but, aside from a matter of principle in maximising the efficiency of any one plan,



it is obvious that the acceptance of such a concept would result in Keyes' gaining command of a general purpose force and his involvement in all the operations under consideration, without regard to area or type. This was anathema to the service machinery, and could be seen as a major factor in the decision on the manner of sending the Glens to the Middle East.

With such a goal clearly in mind, Keyes then advocated the creation of a second striking force, again suited for any number of operations under consideration. Though this was tentatively agreed to by the COS, there was almost no effort to bring it into being until the operation against the Canaries began to take form. The development of this force again shows a definite turn away from a general-purpose force under Keyes to a force designed for one particular operation under commanders who dealt only with their respective service ministries. The available records bear no indication of a serious investigation into the general-purpose force, perhaps because this would have raised further questions of control. In this respect, the material requirements outlined in January 1941, calling for a specialised 'invasion corps' come to mind. It is quite surprising that no further reference was made to this corps, although the PILGRIM force by the end had assumed its nature. In all this, in respect to the scale of combined operations called for by the limited policy, as opposed to major landings on the Continent, Keyes' views could be held valid, as the post-war Royal Marine organisation would seem to bear out. The point is not to debate here the merits of the opposing concepts of Keyes and the planning system, but

to indicate that such a debate was, by all the evidence available, never carried out, and the primary reason would appear to be personal and organisational influences.

The lack of coordination in the operations mounted is also in evidence. In the numerous incidents recounted, from the stowing of the ships in MENACE and the earmarking of shipping for WORKSHOP through the embarkation arrangements of the Glens for the Middle East, there was a constant dispute between the Directorate and the planning system. The seriousness of the situation was increased by the fact that such small matters came to light at the highest levels of the direction of the war, as seen in many of the minutes and letters quoted. This organisational fault has already been noted. It would also seem that, in these technical matters, the Directorate was often correct, as indeed one would expect of an organisation primarily concerned with this one type of operation. The technical expertise of the Directorate was thus not used to the fullest extent.

The artificial division of responsibilities for combined operations meant that the Royal Marines, the force best suited for such affairs, was kept virtually separate from the Directorate despite the attempts by both Bourne and Keyes to have them placed under directorate control. This separation, one extremely difficult to defend on a rational basis, had its own effects on the development of both the Royal Marines and the Special Service troops. Apart from the one JPS study of January 1941, rejected because it had not been



requested, the evolution of these forces was devoid of any correlation between operational requirements and structure.

War is a dynamic process, never fully rational. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of those charged with its higher direction to clearly define the aims, to impose as logical framework as possible on the allocation of the resources of time, manpower, and material, and to create an organisation suitable to carry out established policies. The ideal, as in any field of human endeavor, will never be fully attained, but there will be measurable degrees of success. The military historian must attempt to ascertain this degree, and the reasons therefor, so that the decision-takers in the future may be aware of the often detracting influences of organisation and personality in this theoretically rational process.

The higher direction of combined operations in the United Kingdom from Dunkirk to Pearl Harbor, as examined in this work, must be deemed, in the context of the declared strategy of the time, to be a rather limited success. While a sound base was provided for later development, the operational results were not proportionate to the effort invested. Organisational deficiencies, exacerbated by personal differences that were virtually irreconcilable, proved time and time again to be a stumbling block to the rationally effective use of the resources available. Those who may be involved in similar decision-taking in the future, both in the United Kingdom and its allied countries, could usefully review this record, and reflect thereon, for, if brought to the test, they can, and must, do better.

## APPENDIX A - The First Directive

SECRET

C.O.S. (40) 468  
17th June, 1940

WAR CABINET

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

## RAIDING OPERATIONS: DIRECTIVE TO GENERAL BOURNE

We have approved the attached directive\* for Lieut.-General A.G.B. Bourne, C.B., D.S.O., M.V.O., who has been appointed Commander Raiding Operations and Adviser to the Chiefs of Staff on Combined Operations.

(signed) R.E.C. PEIRSE, V.C.A.S.  
T.S.V. PHILLIPS, V.C.N.S.  
R.H. HAINING, V.C.I.G.S.

\*Annex

## DIRECTIVE

To: Lieut.-General A.G.B. Bourne, C.B., D.S.O., M.V.O., Royal Marines.

1. You are appointed Commander of Raiding Operations on coasts in enemy occupation and Adviser to the Chiefs of Staff on Combined Operations.

Raiding Operations

2. The object of raiding operations will be to harass the enemy and cause him to disperse his forces, and to create material damage, particularly on the coastline from Northern Norway to the western limit of German-occupied France.

3. We propose to give you, within the limits of the forces and equipment available and subject to directions which you receive from time to time from the Chiefs of Staff, complete discretion in the choice of objectives and the scale of operation undertaken. The Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee have been instructed to help you in the choice of suitable objectives. You are to keep the Chiefs of Staff informed of the operations you propose to carry out.

4. Six Independent Companies and a School of Training in Irregular Operations have already been raised by the War Office. These and the irregular Commandos now being raised will come under your operational command and any administrative suggestions you may wish to make, e.g. for the organisation of units, their location in the United Kingdom, etc. will be met as far as they can be.



In addition the War Office have taken preliminary steps to raise parachutist volunteers of whom a number will be placed under your command. When raised, they will be trained by the Air Ministry and the War Office according to your requirements and advice.

5. Should you want further independent units, over and above those already raised, you should discuss your requirements with Service Departments and advise us accordingly.

6. Certain raids by the independent companies have already been planned by the General Staff in the War Office. You should make yourself acquainted with such projects at once and take over control of any planned raids when you deem it advisable.

7. Irregular actions of various types are undertaken from time to time by the Service Intelligence Departments. There must therefore be close touch between your staff and these departments in order that your several activities shall not interfere with each other and that, on occasions, co-operation may be possible.

#### Combined Operations

8. Your second role will be to take over command of the Inter-Services Training and Development Centres and to act as our adviser on the organisation required for opposed landings.

9. Three brigades groups are being detailed for special training in combined operations as soon as they can be equipped. Of these, one may be made available at your request for purely raiding operations, in which case it would, of course, be placed under your command. You will, however, be responsible for supervising the technical training of all troops earmarked for combined operations.

In addition we wish you to press on the development and production of special landing craft and equipment and to advise us, when the occasion arises, as to its allotment.

10. If it is desired to undertake a combined operation, detailed plans will be worked out by the Service Departments (through the medium of the Inter-Service Planning Staff) and the commander designate. Both will require your technical advice and help.

#### Relations with other Staffs

11. We are directing the Inter-Service Planning Staff to consult you whenever they receive a combined operational project for examination which implies a landing on a hostile shore.

You should maintain close liaison with this staff and also with the operational and intelligence staffs of the Service Departments and with the Inter-Service Project Board. At the same time, you will have direct access to the Chiefs of Staff Committee who will also advise you of any combined operations which are envisaged.

Headquarters and Staff

12. Your headquarters will be at the Admiralty. You should let us know as soon as possible what staff you need.

13. An Officer of the Royal Air Force will be attached to your staff who will also be responsible, under the Air Ministry, for the development as far as the Air Force are concerned, of parachute troops and other air requirements for raiding and irregular operations.

Secrecy

14. You will appreciate the paramount need for secrecy.



APPENDIX B - The Draft Directive of 12 October 1940, as Revised by Keyes on 21 October 1940.

Note: (Material added by Keyes)  
(Material deleted by Keyes)

DRAFT DIRECTIVE TO DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS

1. Your duties comprise those of Commander of Raiding Operations on Coasts in Enemy Occupation and Advisor to the Chiefs of Staff on Combined Operations.

Raiding Operations

2. The object of raiding operations will be to harass the enemy and cause him to disperse his forces, and to create material damage, particularly on the coast line from northern Norway to the western limit of German-occupied France.

3. We propose to give you, within the limits of the forces and equipment available and subject to the directions you receive from time to time from the Chiefs of Staff, complete discretion in the choice of objectives and the scale of operations undertaken. The Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee have been instructed to help you in the choice of suitable objectives. You are to keep the Chiefs of Staff informed of operations you propose to carry out.

4. Irregular operations of various types are undertaken from time to time by the service departments. There must therefore be close touch between your staff and these departments, in order that your several activities should not interfere with each other and that, on occasions, co-operation may be possible.

Irregular Forces

5. A special brigade of irregular troops, comprising five special battalions, is now being organised in the United Kingdom by the War Office. This brigade will be at your disposal from 10th November 1940. The half-size commando of 250 men in Northern Ireland will also be available should you require it.

6. Your responsibilities in regard to these units is defined as follows:

(a) Operations

The special brigade will be under your operational control. The commander will be entirely at your disposal (but operation orders issued to him should be approved by the War Office.)

(b) Training

You will be responsible, through the brigade commander, for the training of the special brigade. You will communicate direct with the War Office (Director of Military Training) regarding any assistance you may require in training these units.

(c) Administration

The War Office will be responsible for the general administration of the special brigade, including maintenance and movement of its units. You will however, be responsible for advising the War Office as to how these units can best be organised, armed, equipped, and located to suit your particular needs.

- (d) You are authorised to communicate with appropriate directors of the service ministries on any matter requiring action or advice.

7. Should you want additional forces for any particular operation you should discuss your requirements with the service departments and advise us accordingly.

Combined Operations

8. Your second role will be to take over command of the ISTDCs and to act as our advisor on the organisation required for opposed landings.

9. Certain troops will from time to time be placed under your command for special training in combined operations. You will be responsible for their technical training in amphibious warfare, and for the development and production of special landing craft and equipment. You will also advise us as to the allotment of such craft and equipment.

10. You have been charged by the Prime Minister with the responsibility for the planning and execution of all raiding operations involving not more than about 5,000 men, and in this you may call upon the ISPS for any assistance you may require.

When it is decided to undertake a combined operation (whether by regular or irregular forces) beyond the limited scope of a raid, detailed plans will be worked out by the service departments (through the medium of the ISPS) and the commanders designate. Both will require your technical advice and help.

Relation with Other Staffs

11. We are directing the ISPS to consult you whenever they receive a combined operation project for examination which implies a landing on hostile shore.

You should maintain close liaison with this staff and also with the operational and intelligence staffs of the service departments and with the Inter-Service Project Board. At the same time, you will have direct access to the Chiefs of Staff Committee which will also advise you of any combined operations that are envisaged.



An officer of the Royal Air Force is attached to your staff. He will be responsible, under the Air Ministry, for all air requirements for raiding and irregular operations (and for advice on the air training of an airborne force and the development of the means of transportation of such a force.)

The War Office  
12th October 1940.

APPENDIX C - The Second Directive

C.O.S. (41) 166  
14th March, 1941

## WAR CABINET

## CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

## DIRECTIVE TO THE DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS

Note by Major-General Ismay

The Prime Minister has approved the amendments to the directive to the Director of Combined Operations, which were put forward by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, and agreed to by the Chiefs of Staff on 11th March (see Annex to Minutes of C.O.S. (41) 93rd Meeting, Minute 1). The Prime Minister has also added a new paragraph at the end of the corrections to paragraph 2(3).

A copy of the directive in its final form is attached.

(Signed) H.L. ISMAY.

## DIRECTIVE TO THE DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS

The responsibilities of the Director of Combined Operations were laid down in a directive issued to Lt.-General A.G.B. Bourne by the Chiefs of Staff in June 1940. In view of the changes which have taken place since that date, it is desirable that these responsibilities should be re-defined.

At the same time, it is to be recognised that the division of responsibility between the Director of Combined Operations on the one hand and the Joint Planning Staff on the other is not capable of precise definition. There must always be border-line cases which will have to be settled as they arise by mutual consultations.

General Scope of D.C.O.'s Responsibilities

2. The Director of Combined Operations is responsible under the general direction of the Minister of Defence and the Chiefs of Staff, for:-

- (a) The Command and training in irregular warfare generally, and in landing operations in particular, of the troops specially organised for this purpose, i.e. the Special Service Troops.
- (b) The supervision of the technical training in landing operations of such other troops as may from time to time be earmarked for enterprises which call for this particular type of training.
- (c) The development, including experiment, research and trial, of all forms of special equipment and craft required for opposed landings.



- (d) The initiation, within the general policy prescribed, and the planning and execution of operations by the Special Service Troops, reinforced if necessary by small forces - naval, military and air - which are not normally under his command.

For the purpose of making plans he may have any assistance he requires from the Joint Planning Staff. In this connection, the Prime Minister has laid it down as a guide that the Director of Combined Operations should be responsible for the planning and execution of raiding operations which involve not more than 5,000 men.

- (e) The provision of advice to the Chiefs of Staff on the technical aspects of opposed landing operations. When the Chiefs of Staff Committee are considering an operation which involves an opposed landing, the Director of Combined Operations should be present when that part of the plan is under discussion.

Similarly, when the Joint Planning Staff are directed to prepare or wish to suggest outline plans for an operation which involves an opposed landing, they should first consult the Director of Combined Operations.

Subject to: -

- (a) his concurrence that the opposed landing is practicable;
- (b) the general nature of the project being approved by the Chiefs of Staff and Defence Committee;

D.C.O.'s staff and the Joint Planning Staff will work in conjunction; the Joint Planning Staff preparing the General Plan and the Director of Combined Operations' Staff preparing that part relative to the opposed landing. Subsequently the Commanders designate will consult the Director of Combined Operations and his staff when working out their plans.

The above does not apply to the work of the F.O.P. section, who will receive their instructions both as to what they plan and who they consult, from the Minister of Defence office.

- (f) The provision of advice to the Chiefs of Staff on the tactical use and allocation of carriers and landing craft for combined operations. The Director of Combined Operations will be responsible for the training of naval personnel in so far as opposed landings are concerned, including officers and men of carriers, landing craft and beach parties.

He will have under his command and operational control carriers and landing craft for raiding purposes, which will include such transports as are from time to time allotted by the Admiralty for this purpose.

### Administration

3. The routine administration of the Special Service Troops including maintenance and movements, will be the responsibility of the War Office. The D.C.O. is, however, responsible for advising the War Office as to how these units can best be organised, armed, equipped and located, to meet his particular needs.

### Special Equipment and Landing Craft

4. The Director of Combined Operations will have under his command and direction the Inter-Services Training and Development Centres.

### Authority for Operations

5. The general policy for raiding operations will be laid down from the time to time by the Chiefs of Staff in accordance with the direction of the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.



## APPENDIX D - The Third Directive

SECRET

C.O.S. (41) 629

16th October, 1941

## WAR CABINET

## CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

## COMBINED OPERATIONS AND RAIDS

## Note by Secretary

The attached directive\*, as approved by the Chiefs of Staff, is circulated for record purposes.

Great George Street,  
S.W.1.

(Signed) L.C. Hollis

\*Annex I.

## ANNEX I

## DIRECTIVE TO THE ADVISER ON COMBINED OPERATIONS

1. You are appointed Adviser on Combined Operations (short title Commodore C.).

General Responsibility

2. Under the general direction of the Chiefs of Staff you will: -

- (a) Act as technical adviser on all aspects of, and at all stages in, the planning and training for combined operations.
- (b) Be responsible for co-ordinating the general training policy for combined operations for the three Services (see para. 5(a) below). You will command the Combined Training Centres and Schools of Instruction.
- (c) Study tactical and technical developments in all forms of combined operations varying from small raids to a full scale invasion of the Continent.
- (d) Direct and press forward research and development in all forms of technical equipment and special craft peculiar to combined operations.

Planning

3. The procedure by which planning for large scale operations will be carried out is shown in Annex II. You will note that it is incumbent upon you to give technical advice upon all plans for combined operations at all stages from their inception to the point when they are finally approved. It is equally incumbent upon the Commanders and Staff to seek your technical advice at all stages of planning.

4. The procedure with regard to small raids will be similar to that of large scale operations, with the exception of raids on a very small scale which are carried out by Special Service Troops only. For these operations you will appoint the Force Commander, subject to the approval of the Chiefs of Staff; and you will be responsible for the detailed plan.

### Training

5. You will: -

- (a) Preside over an Inter-Service Committee consisting of the A.C.N.S. (Weapons), Admiralty, and the Directors of Training at the War Office and Air Ministry. This Committee will formulate the training and technical policy for combined operations and will maintain close liaison with the organisation for the development of airborne forces.
- (b) Be responsible for co-ordinating the teaching at such schools of instruction or training establishments as it may be found necessary to set up.
- (c) Command the Combined Training Centres\* at which the training of formations and units in combined operations will be carried out under their Commanders and with the technical advice of the Staffs of the Centres. This advice will be your responsibility.

\* These include Initial Training Centres such as H.M.S. Northney and H.M.S. Tormentor and Raiding Craft Bases such as Brightlingsea and H.M.S. St. Helier.

- (d) Advise, as required, Commanders, subsequent to their appointment for an operation, on the technical training of their forces. It is equally incumbent on them to seek your advice on this matter.

### Tactical and Technical Developments and Special Equipment

6. You will set up under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Adviser on Combined Operations an Inter-Services Committee which, under the guidance of the Policy Committee referred to in para. 5(a), will deal with questions of detailed inspection, training, equipment and administration.

### Special Service Troops

7. The Special Service Troops will be under your command. Their Administration will, however, remain the responsibility of the War Office. These troops are to be regarded, so far as combined operations are concerned, as specialists. Beyond such tasks as you may allot to them, e.g., at the various centres of instruction, these troops will be available for specific combined operations when they will be placed under the Commander appointed for that operation.

Para. 7 is subject to early review.



ANNEX II

C.O.S. consider Outline Plan  
with A.C.O. as adviser

Outline Plan

Outline plan is  
approved as guide  
only to Force  
Commander.

C.O.S. issue necessary  
instructions for project  
to be examined by Joint  
Planning Staff with advice of  
A.C.O.

Force Commanders

Force Commanders produce Final  
Plan in conjunction with Joint  
Planning Staff and with advice of  
A.C.O.

Final plan considered by C.O.S.  
with A.C.O. as adviser.

Implementation of approved Plan  
by Force Commanders assisted by  
Joint Planning Staff and Service  
Ministries

A requirement arises

## APPENDIX E - The Fourth Directive

SECRET

C.O.S. (41) 732

9th December, 1941

## WAR CABINET

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEEDIRECTIVE TO ADVISER ON COMBINED OPERATIONS

## Note by Secretary

The attached revised directive to the Adviser on Combined Operations has been approved\* by the Chiefs of Staff and is circulated for information and record purposes.

(Signed) L.C. Hollis

Great George Street, S.W. 1.

9th December, 1941.

\*C.O.S. (41) 414th Meeting, Minute 7.

DIRECTIVE TO THE ADVISER ON COMBINED OPERATIONS

1. You are appointed Adviser on Combined Operations. This title is always to be used when you are acting in an advisory capacity. When exercising your executive functions, you will use the title "Commodore Combined Operations" (short Title - C.C.O.).

General Responsibility

2. Under the general direction of the Chiefs of Staff you will: -

- (a) Act as technical adviser on aspects of, and at all stages in, the planning and training for combined operations.
- (b) Be responsible for co-ordinating the general training policy for combined operations for the three Services (see para. 5(a) below).
- (c) Study in conjunction with the Chiefs of Staff Organisation tactical and technical developments in all forms of combined operations varying from small raids to a full scale invasion of the Continent.
- (d) Direct and press forward research and development in all forms of technical equipment and special craft peculiar to combined operations.

Planning

3. The procedure by which planning for operations other than those referred to in para. 4 will be carried out is shown in Annex II. You will note that it is incumbent upon the Commanders-in-Chief at Home, Force Commanders and Staff to seek your technical advice



at all stages of planning and to keep you informed of their intentions.

4. In the case of operations which are carried out by Special Service Troops only, you will appoint the Commander of the Special Service Troops who will prepare the detailed plan in conjunction with you and under the Commander-in-Chief carrying out the raid. In such cases you will keep the Joint Planning Staff in touch at all stages.

### Training

5. You will:-

- (a) Be responsible for co-ordinating the teaching at such schools of instruction or training establishments as it may be found necessary to set up.
- (b) Command the Combined Training Centres\* at which the training of formations and units in combined operations will be carried out under their Commanders and with the technical advice of the Staffs of the Centres. This advice will be your responsibility.
- (c) Advise, as required, Force Commanders, subsequent to their appointment for an operation, on the technical training of their forces. It is equally incumbent on them to seek your advice on this matter.

\* These include Initial Training Centres such as H.M.S. Northney and H.M.S. Tormentor and Raiding Craft Bases such as Brightlingsea and H.M.S. St. Helier, and such other training centres or bases as it may be necessary to set up.

### Inter-Service Committees

6. You will:-

- (a) Preside over the Combined Operations Committee which will have as members Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Weapons), Admiralty; Director of Operational Training, Air Ministry; Director of Military Training, War Office. This Committee will formulate training and development policy for combined operations and will maintain close liaison with the organisation for the training and development of airborne forces.
- (b) Preside over the Combined Operations Air Committee which will have as members the 5th Sea Lord, Admiralty, or his representatives; Vice-Chief Imperial General Staff or his representatives, War Office; Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, Air Ministry or his representatives; Air Commodore C.T.C. This Committee will examine the air requirements for combined operations. The Committee will formulate co-ordinated proposals on air requirements for submission to the Chiefs of Staff.

- (c) Set up a Combined Operations Sub-Committee which under the guidance of the Committee referred to in para. 6(a), will deal with questions of training, equipment and administration and keep touch with progress.
- (d) Set up a Combined Operations Communications Committee with representatives of the Signal Branches of the three Services to deal with all communications questions affecting combined operations.

### Ships and Craft

7. The policy for the allocation of assault ships and landing craft throughout the world will be decided from time to time by the Chiefs of Staff.

All ships (other than Merchant Navy ships) and craft in the British Isles allocated for combined operations will be under your command except during such time as they are specifically turned over to the Force Commanders for an operation.

Merchant Navy ships allocated by the Admiralty for combined operational purposes will be attached to your command, or that of the Force Commanders, but will be administered by the Director of Sea Transport.

You will be required to inform the Admiralty from time to time of the state of availability of all ships and craft held for combined operational purposes.

### Special Service Troops

8. The Special Service Troops will be under your command. Their administration will, however, remain the responsibility of the War Office. Beyond such tasks as you may allot to them, e.g. at the various centres of instruction, these troops will be available for specific combined operations when they will be placed under the Commander appointed for that operation.



ANNEX II

C.O.S. consider Outline Plan  
with A.C.O. as adviser

Outline Plan

Outline plan is  
approved as guide  
only to Force  
Commander.

C.O.S. issue necessary  
instructions for project  
to be examined by Joint  
Planning Staff with advice of  
A.C.O.

Force Commanders

Force Commanders produce Final  
Plan in conjunction with Joint  
Planning Staff and with advice of  
A.C.O.

Final plan considered by C.O.S.  
with A.C.O. as adviser.

Implementation of approved Plan  
by Force Commanders assisted by  
Joint Planning Staff and Service  
Ministries

A requirement arises

## APPENDIX F - General Sir Leslie Hollis and the Relief of Keyes

One of the few first-hand accounts of a major decision concerning the Directorate of Combined Operations is to be found in James Leasor, War at the Top (London 1959), pp. 122-125. This is based on the experiences of General Sir Leslie Hollis, and explains in detail the decision concerning Keyes' relief. In sum, it states that Churchill called Hollis in and asked him if Keyes and the COS were having difficulties. When Hollis explained the situation, Churchill asked for a recommendation, and Hollis suggested that Keyes be asked for his resignation. Churchill thereupon dictated a letter to this effect. Sensing Churchill's reluctance to sign it, Hollis pressed him to do so, and then had the letter despatched before Churchill could change his mind. Leasor writes that Churchill did have second thoughts, but, as the letter had already been sent, he stood by the decision.

The difficulty is that this account in no way corresponds to the minutes in the Prime Minister's files, as quoted in the text. If events happened as Leasor describes, there would have been no need of the minute Churchill sent to Hollis, informing him of the decision and indicating that Churchill had written privately to Keyes. On the whole it would seem that Leasor's description, and perhaps Hollis' memory, are of doubtful accuracy.

The one thing to be noted, however, is Hollis' clear opposition to Keyes. No matter which version is accurate, his lack of impartiality lays him open to criticism, for such impartiality was crucial for the effectiveness of the secretariat.



# APPENDIX G - List of Abbreviations

ACAS	- Assistant Chief of the Air Staff
ACAS(T)	- Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Operational Requirements and Tactics)
ACNS	- Assistant Chief of Naval Staff
ACNS(W)	- Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Weapons)
ACO	- Adviser on Combined Operations
ADCO(A)	- Assistant Director of Combined Operations (Air)
ADCO(M)	- Assistant Director of Combined Operations (Military)
ADCO(N)	- Assistant Director of Combined Operations (Naval)
ADOD(CO)	- Assistant Director of Operations Division (Combined Operations) (Admiralty)
AG	- Adjutant General (War Office Staff Section)
AGRM	- Adjutant General Royal Marines
ALC	- Assault Landing Craft
C-in-C	- Commander in Chief
CAS	- Chief of the Air Staff
CIGS	- Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CLE	- Central Landing Establishment
CLS	- Central Landing School
CNS	- Chief of Naval Staff
COHQ	- Combined Operations Headquarters
COO	- Commander, Offensive Operations
COS	- Chiefs of Staff (Committee)
CTC	- Combined Training Centre
DCAS	- Deputy Chief of the Air Staff
DCIGS	- Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff
DCNS	- Deputy Chief of Naval Staff
DCO	- Director of Combined Operations/ Directorate of Combined Operations
DCOS	- Deputy Chiefs of Staff (Committee)
DCOS(IT)	- Deputy Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee on Inter-Service Training
DDCO	- Deputy Director of Combined Operations
DDCO(A)	- Deputy Director of Combined Operations (Air)
DDCO(M)	- Deputy Director of Combined Operations (Military)
DDCO(N)	- Deputy Director of Combined Operations (Naval)
DDMO	- Deputy Director of Military Operations (War Office)
DDTSD(CO)	- Deputy Director of Training and Staff Duties Division (Combined Operations) (Admiralty)
DDSD	- Deputy Director of Staff Duties (War Office)
DMO&I	- Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (War Office)
DMO&P	- Director of Military Operations and Plans (War Office)
DMT	- Director of Military Training (War Office)
DNC	- Director of Naval Construction (Admiralty)
DNI	- Director of Naval Intelligence (Admiralty)
DSD	- Director of Staff Duties (War Office)
EPS	- Executive Planning Staff
FO	- Flag Officer

FOPS	- Future Operational Planning Staff
GOC	- General Officer Commanding
GS(P)	- General Staff (Plans) (War Office)
GSO	- General Staff Officer
ISPB	- Inter-Services Project Board
ISPS	- Inter-Services Planning Staff
ISSB	- Inter-Services Security Board
ISTDC	- Inter-Services Training and Development Centre
JISC	- Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee
JPC	- Joint Planning Committee
JPS	- Joint Planning Staff
JPSC	- Joint Planning Sub-Committee
LSD	- Landing Ship Dock
LSG	- Landing Ship Gantry
LSI(L)	- Landing Ship Infantry (Large)
LSI(M)	- Landing Ship (Medium)
LSI(S)	- Landing Ship (Small)
LST	- Landing Ship Tank
MCO	- <u>Manual on Combined Operations</u>
MI(R)	- Military Intelligence (Research) (War Office Staff Section)
MLC	- Motor Landing Craft
MNBDO	- Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation (Royal Marines)
MO	- Military Operations (War Office Staff Section)
MT	- Mechanical Transport
RALB	- Rear Admiral Landing Craft and Bases
RM	- Royal Marines
SD	- Staff Duties (War Office Staff Section)
SIS	- Special Intelligence Service
SLC	- Support Landing Craft
SNO	- Senior Naval Officer
SNO(L)	- Senior Naval Officer (Landings)
SO	- Senior Officer
SOASC	- Senior Officer Assault Ships and Craft
SOE	- Special Operations Executive
SPS	- Strategic Planning Staff
SS	- Special Service
TLC	- Tank Landing Craft
VACTC	- Vice Admiral Combined Training Centre
VCAS	- Vice Chief of the Air Staff
VCIGS	- Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff
VCNS	- Vice Chief of Naval Staff
WRNS	- Women's Royal Naval Service



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 2949 - 2955 Canaries  
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have clear and detailed memories, and were the most helpful.

Correspondence

Questions were asked of the surviving members of the secretariat, JPS, and COHQ. Response varied greatly, the most helpful being the following:

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Air Chief Marshal Sir Walter Dawson

General Sir Hugh Stockwell

Major General M.W.M. MacLeod

Captain G.A. French, RN.